

Heaven and Hell

DIVINE JUSTICE VINDICATED IN THE PLURALITY OF EXISTENCES



Allan Kardec

Spiritist Alliance for Books

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Practical Spiritism

HEAVEN AND HELL

OR
THE DIVINE JUSTICE VINDICATED IN THE PLURALITY OF
EXISTENCES.

*CONTAINING A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE VARIOUS DOCTRINES CONCERNING THE
PASSAGE FROM THE EARTHLY LIFE TO SPIRIT-LIFE, FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS,
ANGELS AND DEVILS, ETC. FOLLOWED BY NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF THE STATE OF THE SOUL
DURING AND AFTER DEATH.*

BY
ALLAN KARDEC

“Say to them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’”

Translated by
ANNA BLACKWELL.
LONDON, 1878

New Edition Totally Revised by the Spiritist Alliance for Books 2003



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The Spiritist Group of New York (SGNY) is a not-for-profit organization, which has the sole aim to promote and disseminate the Spiritist Doctrine in English, as codified by Allan Kardec.

The group was officially established on April 12th, 2001. However, some of its participants have been earnestly fostering the dissemination of the Spiritist Doctrine in the United States and in the United Kingdom for about ten years.

As a result, a number of its founders and participating members have founded the Spiritist Alliance for Books (SAB), which is an organization that aims to unite people from all over the world who are willing to volunteer in the effort of translating spiritist books (which were originally written in other languages) into English.

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PREFACE TO THE NEW ENGLISH EDITION

For many years the English speaking public has had the opportunity to become acquainted with the principles of the Spiritist Doctrine due to the thorough efforts and work of some dedicated translators. One of them was the British writer, Ms. Anna Blackwell, who alone translated three of the five books that comprise the Spiritist Codification: “The Spirits’ Book,” “The Mediums’ Book” and “Heaven and Hell.” The latter is the motive of our endeavor. Our main concern was to insure a faithful translation of the original French written and published by Allan Kardec in 1865. In order to achieve that goal we scrutinized both the English and the French version, analyzing paragraph by paragraph. The reader can rest assured that he will be able to enjoy the original unaltered translation of the French version.

A project of this magnitude could only be accomplished through the efforts and dedication of tireless workers who we would like to acknowledge for their excellent contribution: Dean Whorton, Marie Levinson, Milena Whorton, Elza D’Agosto, Crisley Thomé, João Korngold, Márcia Lacerda, Antonio Leite, Eliene Brito and Louis Day.

In particular, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our spiritual guides for being ever present at our side through the entire process and completion of this work.

Jussara Korngold
Spiritist Alliance for Books
New York, April, 2003

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Of the four principal works of Allan Kardec, the first *The Spirits' Book*, sets forth the Spiritist theory of life and destiny; the second *The Mediums' Book*, treats of experimental Spiritism, in other words, of Medianimity¹, under its various aspects and in reference to the conclusions to which it leads; the third (*Heaven and Hell*, which the translator has now the pleasure of offering to English readers,) gives a series of spirit-narratives confirmatory of the Spiritist theory; the fourth (*Genesis*, of which a translation will soon follow the present volume,) shows the consonance of this theory with the results of modern science.

These works constitute the basis of a religious belief that is equally in harmony with reason, with science, with experience, and with aspiration. They consequently supply the true substitute for the unreasoning faith that is so rapidly dying out from the minds of men, the true antidote to the scientific materialism of the day, the true cure for the selfishness which is the practical outcome of the short-sightedness that regards our present life as the sum of our existence, the true explanation and guide of the sentiment which prompts each human being to desire something better than the unsatisfying conditions among which he finds himself.

The correctness of this estimate of the works of Allan Kardec will be recognized in proportion, as the scope and bearings of the principles they enunciate are understood; and the conditions of human life will improve in proportion—and only in proportion—as the principles obtain mental assent, and practical application, among mankind.

ANNA BLACKWELL
London, 1877

¹ From the Latin words *medium*, middle, and *anima*, soul; the special faculty which enables certain persons to serve as a middle-man, or channel of communication, between souls in bodies of flesh and souls in the fluidic bodies of the spirit-world.

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PART FIRST

DOCTRINE

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Chapter I

FUTURE LIFE AND ANNIHILATION

1. It is certain that we live, think, and act; it is not less certain that we shall die. But, on leaving Earth, whither shall we go? What will become of us? Shall we be better off, or shall we be worse off? Shall we continue to exist, or shall we cease to exist? "*To be, or not to be,*" is the alternative presented to us; it will be for always, or not at all; it will be *everything*, or *nothing*; we shall live on eternally, or we shall cease to live, once and forever. The alternative is well worth the consideration.

Everyone feels a need to live, to love, and be happy. Announce, to one who believes himself to be at the point of death, that his life is to be prolonged, that the hour of death is delayed—announce to him, moreover, that he is going to be happier than he has ever been—and his heart will beat high with joy and hope. But to what end does the human heart thus instinctively aspire after happiness, if a breath suffices to scatter its aspirations?

Can anything be more agonizing than the idea that we are doomed to utter and absolute destruction, that our dearest affections, our intelligence, our knowledge so laboriously acquired, are all to be dissolved, thrown away, and lost forever? Why should we strive to become wiser or better? Why should we apply restraints to our passions? Why should we exhaust ourselves with effort and study, if our exertions are to bear no fruit? If, beforelong, perhaps tomorrow, all that we have done is to be of no further use to us? Were such really our doom, the lot of mankind would be a thousand times worse than that of the brutes; for the brute lives thoroughly in the present, in the gratification of its bodily appetites, with no torturing anxiety, no tormenting aspiration, to impair its enjoyment of the passing hour. But a secret and invincible intuition tells us that such cannot be our destiny.

2. The belief in annihilation necessarily leads a man to concentrate all his thoughts on his present life; for what, in fact, could be more illogical than to trouble ourselves about a future which we do not believe will have any existence? And as he whose attention is thus exclusively directed to his present life naturally places his own interest above that of others, this belief is the most powerful stimulant to selfishness, and he who holds it is perfectly consistent with himself in saying: "Let us get the greatest possible amount of enjoyment out of this world while we are in it; let us secure all the pleasures which the present can offer, seeing that, after death, everything will be over with us; and let us hasten to make sure of our own enjoyment, for we know not how long our life may last." Such as one is, moreover, equally consistent in arriving at this further conclusion—most dangerous to the well being of society—"Let us make sure of our enjoyment, no matter by what means; let our motto be: 'Each for himself;' the good things in life are prizes for the most adroit."

If a few are restrained, by respect for public opinion, from carrying out this program to its full extent, what restraint is there for those who stand in no such awe of their neighbors? Who regard human law as a tyranny that is exercised only over those who are sufficiently wanting in cleverness to bring themselves within its reach, and who consequently apply all their ingenuity to evading alike its requirements and its penalties? If any doctrine merits the qualifications of pernicious and *anti-social*, it is assuredly that of annihilation, because it destroys the sentiments of solidarity and fraternity, which are the sole basis for social relations.

3. Let us suppose that an entire nation has acquired, in some way or other, the certainty that, at the end of a week, a month, or a year, it will be utterly destroyed, that not a single individual of its people will be left alive, that they will all be utterly annihilated, and that not a trace of their existence will remain; what, in such a case, would be the line of conduct adopted by the people thus doomed to a certain and foreseen destruction, during the short time which they would still have to exist? Would they work for their moral improvement, or for their instruction? Would they continue to work for their living? Would they scrupulously respect the rights, the property, and the life, of their neighbors?

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Would they submit to the laws of their country, or to any ascendancy, even to that parental authority, the most legitimate of all? Would they recognize the existence of any duty? Assuredly not. Well, —the social ruin which we have imagined, by the way of illustration, as overtaking an entire nation, is being effected, individually, from day to day, by the doctrine of annihilation. If the practical consequences of this doctrine are not so disastrous to society as they might be, it is because, in the first place, there is, among the greater number of those whose vanity is flattered by the title of “free-thinker,” more of braggadocio than of absolute unbelief, more doubt than conviction, and more dread of annihilation than they care to show; and, in the second place, because those who really believe in annihilation are a very small minority, and are consequently influenced, in spite of themselves, by the contrary opinion, and held in check by the resistant forces of society and of the State: but, should absolute disbelief in a future existence ever be arrived at by the majority of mankind, the dissolution of society would necessarily follow. The propagation of the doctrine of annihilation would lead, inevitably, to this result.

But² whatever may be the consequences of the doctrine of annihilation, if that doctrine were true, it would have to be accepted; for, if annihilation were our destiny, neither opposing systems of philosophy, nor the moral and social ills that would result from our knowledge that such a destiny was awaiting us, could prevent our being annihilated. And it is useless to attempt to disguise from ourselves that skepticism, doubt, indifference, are gaining ground every day, notwithstanding the efforts of the various religious bodies to the contrary. But if the religious systems of the day are powerless against skepticism, it is because they lack the weapons necessary for combating the enemy; so that, if their teaching were allowed to remain in a state of immobility, they would, soon, be inevitably defeated in the struggle. What is lacking to those systems—in this age of positivism, when men demand to understand before believing—is the confirmation of their doctrines by facts and by their concordance with the discoveries of Positive Science. If theoretic systems say white where facts say black, we must choose between an enlightened appreciation of evidence and a blind acceptance of arbitrary statements.

4. It is in this state of things that the phenomena of Spiritism are spontaneously developed in the order of Providence, and oppose a barrier against the invasion of skepticism, not only by argument, or by the prospect of the dangers which it reveals, but also by the production of *physical facts* which render the existence of the soul, and the reality of a future life, both *palpable* and *visible*.

² We knew a young man of eighteen, who was attacked by a disease of the heart, pronounced by the faculty to be incurable. His physicians had declared that he might die in a week, or might live on for a couple of years, but that his life could not possibly be prolonged beyond that period. The young man, on becoming aware of the fate that awaited him, immediately broke off his studies and gave himself up to every sort of debauchery. To the arguments addressed to him upon the dangers of such a life of disorder to no one in his state of health, he invariably replied: “What does it matter, seeing that I have only two years to live? Where would be the use of fatiguing myself with study? I am making the most of the remnant of life that is left to me, and am determined to enjoy myself while it lasts.” Such is the logical consequence of a belief in annihilation.

If this young man had been a Spiritist, he would have said to himself: “Death will only destroy my body, which I shall throw aside like a worn-out garment; but my spirit will live forever. I shall be, in my next phase of existence, just what I shall have made of myself by my present life. Nothing that I shall have acquired, in morality or in knowledge, will be lost to me, for every new acquisition I shall have made will be so much added to my advancement. The cure of every imperfection, of which I may have been able to rid myself during my present existence, which will take me a step further on my road to felicity; my future happiness or unhappiness will be the result of good or bad use I shall have made of the life which I am now living. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance for me to make the most of the short time still remaining to me, and to avoid whatever would tend to diminish my strength.”

Which of the two doctrines we are comparing is the preferable one?

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Each human being is, undoubtedly, free to believe anything, or to believe nothing; but those who employ the ascendancy of their knowledge and position in propagating, among the masses, and especially among the rising generation, the negation of a future life, are sowing wide the seeds of social confusion and dissolution, and are incurring a heavy responsibility by doing so.

5. There is another doctrine that repudiates the qualification of “Materialist,” because it admits the existence of a principle distinct from matter; we allude to that which asserts that each individual soul is to be absorbed in the *Universal Whole*. According to this doctrine, each human being assimilates, at birth, a particle of this principle, which constitutes his soul and gives him life, intelligence and feeling. At death, this soul returns to the common source, and is merged in infinity as a drop of water is merged in the ocean.

This doctrine is, undoubtedly, an improvement over that of pure and simple Materialism, in as much as it admits something more than matter; but its consequences are precisely the same. Whether a man, after death, is dissolved into nothingness, or plunged into a general reservoir, is all one, as far as he himself is concerned; for if, in the one case, he is annihilated, in the other, he loses his individuality, which is, for him, exactly the same thing as though he ceased to exist: in either case, all social relations are destroyed forever. What is essential for each human being is the preservation of his *me*; without that, what does it matter to him whether he exists, or does not exist? In either case, for him, the future is nil, and his present life is the only thing of any importance to him. As regards its moral consequences, this doctrine is, therefore, just as pernicious, just as devoid of hope, just as powerful a stimulus to selfishness, as materialism properly so called.

6. The doctrine we have been considering is open, moreover, to the following objection. All the drops of water contained in the ocean resemble one another exactly and possess identically the same properties, as must necessarily be the case with the several parts of any homogeneous Whole; how is it, then, that the souls of the human race, if they are only so many drops taken out of a great ocean of intelligence, are so unlike one another? Why do we find genius side by side with stupidity? The most sublime virtues, side by side with the most ignoble vices? Kindness, gentleness, forbearance, side by side with cruelty, violence, and barbarity? How can the parts of a homogenous Whole be so different from one another? Will it be said that they are modified by education? But, if so, whence come the various qualities which they bring with them at birth, the precocious intelligence of some, the good or bad instinct of others, that are not only independent of education, but often altogether out of harmony with the surrounding amidst which they are found?

Education, most undoubtedly, does modify the intellectual and moral qualities of the soul; but here another difficulty presents itself. Who is it that gives, to each soul, the education that causes it to progress? Other souls, who—according to the doctrine that makes them out to be drops of a homogenous ocean of soul—could be no more advanced than themselves! On the other hand, if the soul, after having thus progressed during the life, returns to the Universal Whole from which it came, it gives back an improved element to that Whole; and it would therefore follow that the general Whole will be, in course of time, profoundly modified, and improved, by this educational modification of its parts. How is it, in that case, that ignorant and perverse souls are constantly being produced from it?

7. According to this doctrine, the universal source of intelligence, from which souls are produced, *is distinct from the Divinity*; it is, therefore, not quite the same as Pantheism. Pantheism, properly so called, differs from this doctrine in as much as it considers the universal principle of life and intelligence as *constituting the Divinity*. God, according to Pantheism, is both spirit and matter; all the beings, all the bodies of nature, compose the Divinity, of which they are molecules, the constituent elements. God is the total of all that is; each individual, being a part of this total, is himself God; the total is not ruled over by any commanding and superior being; the universe is an immense republic without a chief, or, rather, in which each of its members is a chief, endowed with absolute power.

8. This system is open to a variety of objections, of which the principal are the following: — It being impossible to conceive Divinity without the infinitude of His perfections, how can a Perfect

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Whole be formed of parts so imperfect as we see them to be, and having so great a need of progression? These parts being subjected to the law of progress, it follows that God Himself must progress incessantly; and, if He has been progressing from all eternity, it also follows that He must formerly have been very imperfect. But how is it possible that an imperfect being, made up of wills and ideas so widely divergent from one another, should have been able to conceive the harmonious laws, so admirable in their unity, wisdom, and forethought, that govern the universe? If all souls are portions of the Divinity, all of them must have concurred in establishing the laws of nature; how comes it, then that they are perpetually murmuring against those laws which, according to this doctrine, are of their own inventing? *No theory can be accepted as true unless it can both satisfy our reason and furnish a rational explanation of all the facts with which it deals; if it is belied by a single one of those facts, it cannot be true.*

9. Examined from the point of view of its moral consequences, Pantheism is seen to be as unsatisfactory as it is intellectually absurd. In the first place, the destiny of each soul, according to this system, is, as in the system previously examined, its absorption in a general Whole, with the consequent loss of its individuality. If, on the contrary, it were admitted, according to the opinion of certain pantheists, that souls preserve their individuality, God can have no unitary will, but is an amalgam of myriads of divergent individualities. Besides, each soul being an integral part of the Divinity, no soul is subjected to the sway of any power superior to itself; consequently, no soul incurs any responsibility for its action, whether good or bad, no soul has any motive for doing right, and each soul is free to do all the wrong it pleases, with perfect impunity, seeing that each soul is the sovereign ruler of the universe.

10. The theories we have been examining not only fail to satisfy either the reason or the aspirations of mankind, but they present to the mind a succession of insurmountable difficulties, of questions in regard to matters of fact, which they are utterly incapable of answering. We have to choose between three theoretic alternatives: *annihilation, absorption, and the individuality of the soul before and after death.* It is to this last belief that we are led by reason; and it is this belief that has constituted the basis of all religions in all the ages of the world.

If reason leads us to the conviction of the persistence of the soul's individuality, it also leads us to the admission of the consequence of that persistence, viz., that *the fate of each soul must depend on its own personal qualities*; for it would be irrational to assume that the backward soul of the savage and the evil-minded are at the same level as that of the scientific and the benevolent. Justice demands that each soul should be responsible for its own action; but, in order for souls to be thus responsible, they must be free to choose between good and evil. Unless we admit the freedom of the will, we must necessarily assume the existence of fate; and responsibility cannot co-exist with fatality.

11. All religions have proclaimed the principle of the happiness or unhappiness of the soul after death, in other words, the principle of future rewards and punishments, summed up in the doctrinal idea of "Heaven" and "Hell", which is common to them all. But those religions differ radically as to the *nature* of the rewards and punishments of the future, and especially as to the *conditions* upon which they depend. Hence have arisen contradictory beliefs, which have produced various forms of worship, and have led to the imposition of special practices by each of them as a method of honoring God, and thus of gaining admission to "Heaven" and avoiding "Hell."

12. All the religions of the world were necessarily, at their origin, in harmony with the degree of moral and intellectual advancement of the peoples among whom they took their rise, and who, — being still too deeply sunk in materiality to conceive of things purely spiritual — made the greater part of their religious duties to consist in the accomplishment of certain external forms. For a time, forms suffice to satisfy the mind; at a later period, when men acquire more light, they feel the emptiness of those forms, and, if the doctrines of their faith do not suffice to supply the void left by the collapse of its forms, they abandon their religion and become philosophers.

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13. *If that primitive formula had always kept pace with the accessional movement of the human mind, the same harmony would always have existed between them, and there would have never been any unbelievers, because the need of believing is natural to the human heart, and men will believe if they are presented with religious ideas in harmony with their intellectual needs.* Man would joyfully know whence he comes and whither he is going; but if that which is set before him as the object of life does not correspond either to his aspirations, to the idea that he has formed to himself of God, or to the data of physical science, —if, moreover, it is sought to impose on him, as necessary to the attainment of that object, conditions of which the utility is not perceived by his reason, — he naturally rejects the whole. Materialism and Pantheism appear to him more rational simply because they reason and discuss. Their reasoning is false, *but, at all events, they reason*; and he would rather reason falsely than not reason at all.

But let the doctrine of a future life be presented to him under an aspect that is, at once, satisfactory to his reason, and worthy, in all respects, of the greatness, the justice, and the infinite goodness of God, and he will renounce both Materialism and Pantheism, of which every man feels the hollowness in his secret soul, and which are only accepted for lack of something better; and, as Spiritism gives something very much better than those empty and comfortless theories, it is eagerly welcomed by all those who do not find, in the common beliefs and philosophies of the day, the certainty for which they long, and who are consequently undergoing the tortures of doubt. The Spiritist theory is confirmed both by argument and by facts; and it therefore furnishes the broad and solid basis of belief that no other theory is able to supply.

14. The belief in a future life is instinctive in the human mind; but, as men have hitherto possessed no clear and sufficient ground for this belief, their imagination has engendered the various religious systems that have given rise to the wide diversities of human worship. As the Spiritist Doctrine of the future life is not a work of imagination more or less ingeniously conceived, but is, on the contrary, deduced from, and confirmed by, the observation of physical facts that are now occurring in front of our eyes, it will continue to attract, as it has hitherto done, those whose convictions, on this most momentous of subjects, are divergent or unsettled, and will gradually establish a unitary belief in regard to it; a belief that will be based, no longer on a mere *hypothesis*, but on a *certainty*. *This unification of human conviction, in regard to the future existence of the soul, will be the first step towards the unification of the forms of worship; it will thus exercise a most important and decisive influence on all the various religions of the world, and will lead, first, to their mutual tolerance, and, eventually, to their fusion.*

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Chapter II

FEAR OF DEATH

Causes of the fear of death — Why Spiritists are not afraid of death

CAUSES OF THE FEAR OF DEATH

1. Man, to whatever degree of the scale he belongs, from the savage state upwards, has an innate presentiment about a future life; he feels an intuitive urging that death is not the end of existence, and that those whose demise he regrets are not lost to him forever. This spontaneous belief in a future state is vastly more general than the belief in annihilation. How is it then that we find among those who do believe in the immortality of the soul, so strong an attachment to the earthly life and so great a dread of death?

2. The fear of death is at once a proof of the wisdom of Providence and a consequence of the instinct of self-preservation that is common to all living creatures. It is moreover, essential to the well being of the human race, so long as men are insufficiently enlightened in regard to the conditions of their future life. It serves as a counterpoise to the discouragement which, if not for this fear, would too often lead them to make a voluntary renunciation of their terrestrial existence, and to shirk the labors of this lower sphere, which are necessary to their advancement.

We accordingly see that, among primitive peoples the intuition of a future life is extremely vague, and that it is only in proportion as people advances that this intuition gradually becomes, first, a mere hope and at length, a certainty, but still counter balanced by an instinctive attachment to corporeal life.

3. As man arrives at a true understanding of a future state, his fear of death diminishes; but at the same time, he also comprehends more clearly the purposes for an earthly life, he awaits its ending calmly, without impatience or regret. The certainty of a future life gives another direction to his thoughts, another aim to his activities. Before acquiring this certainty he labored only for the things of the present life; having acquired this certainty he labors for the life to come, yet without neglecting the duties and interests of his present life, because he knows that the character of his future life will be decided by the use he will have made of his present existence. The certainty of again meeting the friends whom he has lost by death, of preserving the relationships he has formed upon the Earth, *of not losing the fruit of any effort*, of continuing, forever, to grow in intelligence and in goodness, gives him patience to await the appointed term of his earthly sojourn and courage to bear, unmurmuring, the momentary fatigues and disappointments of terrestrial life. The solidarity which he sees to exist among spirits and men show him the union which ought to exist among all people of the Earth. Thus, he perceives the true basis of human fraternity and the true objective of charity in the present and in the future.

4. In order to free ourselves from the fear of death, we must be able to look at it from the right point of view; that is to say, we must have penetrated the spirit world in thought. We must have formed to ourselves an idea of that world, as exact as it can be obtained at the present time: a power of discernment denoting, on the part of an incarnate spirit a certain amount of intellectual and moral development, and a certain aptitude for freeing himself from materiality. Among those who are not sufficiently advanced for the acquisition of this knowledge, the physical life takes precedence over the spiritual life.

Man's real life is in the soul; but while he remains attached to external values, he sees life only in the body; and therefore, when the body is deprived of life, he fancies that all is over and abandons

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himself to despair. If instead of concentrating his thought on the *outer garment* of life, he directed *his thought* to the *source* of life, to the soul which is *the real being*, and which survives the change of its outer clothing, he would feel less regret at the idea of losing his body. An instrument of so much trouble and suffering; but for this, man needs a moral strength which is only acquired gradually, and in proportion to his advancement towards maturity.

The fear of death therefore, results from insufficient knowledge of the future life. It also denotes aspirations for the continuance of existence and anxiety lest the destruction of the body should be the end. It is therefore evident it is due to a secret desire for survival that really exists in the soul, although partially hidden under the veil of uncertainty.

-The fear of death diminishes in proportion as we obtain a clearer anticipation of the future life; it disappears entirely when that anticipation has become a certainty.

The wisdom of Providence is seen in the progressive march of human convictions with regard to the continuation of life beyond the grave. If the certainty of a future life had been permitted to man before his mental vision was prepared for such a prospect, he would have been dazzled thereby. And the seductions of such a certainty, too clearly seen, would lead him to neglect the present life, his diligent use of which is the condition for physical and moral advancement.

5. The fear of death has also been kept up by merely human reasons which will disappear with the progress of the race. The first of these is the aspect under which the idea of the future life has hitherto been presented. This viewpoint sufficed for minds of slight advancement, but could not satisfy the mental requirements of intellects that have learned to reason on the subject. The presentation, as absolute truth, of statements that are both irrational in themselves and opposed to the data of physical science, has necessarily led reasoning minds to the conclusion that such a presentation must be unfounded and erroneous. Hence have resulted in the minds of many, utter skepticism in relation to the reality of a future existence that has been presented under an unacceptable aspect. And in the minds of a yet greater number, a half-belief, so strongly plagued by with doubts, differing slightly from utter disbelief. For the latter the idea of a future life is at best, a vague hypothesis, a probability rather than a certainty. They wish that it may be so and yet notwithstanding that desire, they say to themselves, "But what if, after all there should be nothing beyond the grave! We are sure of the present let us busy ourselves with *that*. There will be time enough to think of a future life when we have found out whether that future life really exists!"

"And besides," say the doubters, "what in fact, is the soul? Is it a mathematical point, an atom, a spark, a flame? How does the 'soul' feel? How does it see? How and what does it perceive?" The soul for most people, is not a positive and active reality but a mere abstraction. Those whom they have loved, but from whom they have been separated by death, being reduced, in their thought to the state of atoms, of a spark, or of gas, seem to be separated from them forever and to have lost all the qualities for which they formerly loved them. Most people find it difficult to consider "an atom," "a spark," or "a gas" as an object of affection. They fail to derive satisfaction from the prospect of being themselves converted into "monads," and they try to avoid contemplations that are so vague and cheerless, by restricting their thoughts to the interests, pursuits, and enjoyments of terrestrial life, which offers them at least, the appearance of something real and substantial. The number of those who are swayed by considerations of this kind is very great.

6. Attachment to the things of the earthly life is also kept up, even in the minds of many of those who believe most firmly in the reality of a future life, by the impressions they have retained of the teachings to which they were subjected in their childhood.

The pictures of the future life presented by the Church are not, it must be confessed, either attractive or consoling. On the one hand, we are shown the contortions of the damned, who expiate, in endless tortures and unquenchable flames their momentary errors; ages after ages passing over them without hope of deliverance or pity, and (what is even more incredible,) repentance itself being of no avail in their case. On the other hand, we see the sufferings of the souls who are languishing in

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purgatory, and who are awaiting their deliverance, not from their own efforts for improvement, but from the compassionate efforts of the living who pray for them or have them prayed for by others. These two classes are represented as constituting the immense majority of the population of the other world; and above them hovers the very small minority of the elect, absorbed, throughout eternity, in contemplative beatitude. It is an eternal uselessness which—though undoubtedly preferable to annihilation—is nevertheless, only wearisome monotony and accordingly, in the paintings which represent the blessedness of the elect, the face of the latter usually wears an expression much more suggestive of dullness than of happiness.

Such a view of the future life corresponds neither to our aspirations nor to the idea of progressiveness that we instinctively regard as a necessary element of happiness. It is difficult to imagine that the ignorant savage, whose moral sense is as yet undeveloped, should find himself simply because he has received baptism, on a level with him who, through long years of effort has raised himself to a high degree of knowledge and of practical morality. Still less conceivable is it that the child who has died in infancy, before acquiring the consciousness of itself and of its actions, should enjoy the same privileges simply as the result of its having undergone a ceremony in which its will took no part. Considerations of this nature cause uneasiness in the minds even of fervent believers, whenever they reflect seriously on the doctrines which as children, they were drilled into accepting.

7. The progress which man so laboriously accomplish in the earthly life, having nothing to do with their future happiness, the belief that they can easily secure that happiness by means of ceremonies and outward observances—and that they can even purchase their future happiness with money, without any thorough transformation of their character and habits—tends to attach them still more strongly to worldly pleasures. Many a man who believes in a future life under the guise we are now considering, says to himself in his secret heart, that because his future welfare can be secured by observing certain forms or by making bequests that entail no privation during his life time. It would be unnecessary to impose upon himself any sacrifice for the sake of others, and that the true plan is for the individual, thus he should ensure his own salvation and secure for himself at the same time, the largest possible share of the good things of the present life.

Assuredly such is not the thought of all men, for there are many grand and noble exceptions to the common rule. However it cannot be denied that such is the thought of the majority of mankind, especially among the unenlightened masses, and that the idea commonly entertained in regard to the conditions of happiness in the other world, tends to keep up the attachment to the things of the present one, and consequently acts as a powerful stimulus to selfishness.

8. It is to be remarked yet further, that all our social usages concur to make man cling to the earthly life, and to cower from the path that leads from this world to the next. Death is surrounded by somber ceremonies, far more suggestive of sorrow than of hope. It is always portrayed under a repulsive light, never as a state of transition. All the symbolism employed to indicate a reference to the destruction of the body, and show it as a hideous fleshless specter; none of the symbols employed for this purpose represent death as the deliverance of the soul, joyous and radiant, from terrestrial bondage. The departure for happier state of existence is accompanied only by the lamentations of the survivors, as though the greatest possible misfortune had befallen those who are gone before us. Their weeping friends bid them an eternal farewell, as though they would never again be able to behold them and grieve and thinking that they are deprived of the joys of this lower sphere, as though the other life did not offer enjoyments far greater than those of Earth. “What a misfortune,” it is often said, “to die when he who is taken is young, rich, happy, and with a brilliant future before him!” The idea that such a one can gain more by the change scarcely crosses the mind of any of those whom he has left, so vague, misty, gloomy, and void of hopefulness is the idea generally entertained in regard to the world of souls. Men will doubtless be slow in getting rid of their prejudices concerning death; but they will succeed in doing so as their knowledge of the spirit-life becomes clearer, firmer, and more enlightened.

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9. The common belief moreover places souls in imaginary regions, scarcely accessible to human thought, where they become strangers they have left behind on Earth; the Church itself places an impassable barrier between them and the latter, for it declares that all connections between them had ended, and that all communication between them is impossible. If they are in Hell, all hope of seeing them again is lost forever, unless indeed, for those among the latter who incur the same doom. If they are among the elect, they are entirely absorbed in their own contemplative beatitude. All these suppositions make so wide a separation between the dead and the living that the severance between them seems to be complete and forever; and people would therefore prefer to keep those whom they love beside them on Earth, even though in a state of suffering, rather than see them go away, even though to "Heaven!" Besides is it conceivable that one can be really happy even in "Heaven," if he has to see his child, his father, his mother, his friend, burning forever in unquenchable fire?

WHY SPIRITISTS ARE NOT AFRAID OF DEATH

10. The Spiritist Doctrine changes entirely our views of the future. The life to come is no longer a *hypothesis*, but a *fact*. The state of the soul after death is no longer a matter of theory, but a result of observation. The veil is lifted, and the spirit-world appears to us in all its activity and reality. It is not men who have discovered that world, through some ingenious conception of their imagination; it is *the inhabitants of that world* who come in person to describe to us the state of being in which they find themselves! We see them at every degree of spirit-life, in every phase of happiness or of unhappiness. We contemplate all the incidents of the life beyond the grave. It is this knowledge of the nature and details of life in the spirit-world that enables Spiritists to see death with calmness and gives serenity to his last moments upon the Earth. What sustains him is not a *mere hope*, but a *certainty*; he knows that the future life is only a continuation of his present life, but under more favorable conditions. And he looks forward to it with as much confidence as that with which he looks forward to a new sunrise after a dark and stormy night. This confidence of Spiritist is a result of the *facts* that he has witnessed, and of the accordance of those facts with reason, with the justice and goodness of God, and with the deepest inspirations of the human mind.

For Spiritists the soul is not an abstraction for they know that it possesses an ethereal body which makes of it a real and definite being, susceptible of being conceived of as such by our thought. This knowledge suffices to correct our ideas in regard to its individuality, aptitudes and perceptions. Our remembrance of those who are dear to us repose, henceforth, on *something real*. We no longer represent them to ourselves as so many flickering flames offering nothing of their former personality to our thought. On the contrary, we see them under a concrete form which shows them to belong to the category of living beings. Moreover instead of regarding them as being lost to view, as formerly, in the depths of space, a Spiritist knows that they are beside us and around us; for he has learned that the corporeal world and the spiritual world are in close and perpetual connection. Doubt in relation to the future life being no longer possible to him, he has no longer any reason to be afraid of death. He beholds its approach with perfect equanimity; for he knows that the dissolution of his fleshly body will be for him a deliverance, the opening of a door through which he will pass, not into the yawning abyss of annihilation, but into a higher and happier state of existence.

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Chapter III

HEAVEN

1. The term *heaven* is employed, in a general sense, to designate the boundless expanse of space that surrounds the Earth, and, more specially, the part of the expanse that is above our horizon. The Latin name for that space, *coelum* (derived from the Greek *coilos*, hollow, concave), was given to it by the ancients, because *heaven*, or *the sky*, appeared to them to be an immense concavity. The Ancients believed in the existence of several “heavens”, placed one above the other, composed of a solid, transparent matter, and forming a succession of hollow, concentric spheres, and the center of which, immovable, stood the Earth. These spheres, turning around the Earth, carried with them the stars that were placed within their several circuits.

This belief, due to the paucity of astronomic knowledge, was the basis of the various theologies that represent those concentric “heavens” thus superposed on one another, as localization of progressively increasing degrees of beatitude, the topmost one being the region of supreme felicity. According to the general opinion, there were seven of these “heavens;” hence the saying, “*to be in seventh heaven*,” as the expression of the most perfect happiness. Muslims admit nine “heavens,” in each of which the happiness of the true believer is successively increased. The astronomer Ptolemy (who lived in Alexandria, in the second century of the Christian Era), counted eleven of these “heavens;” the uppermost being styled “*The Empyrean*” (from the Greek word, *pur*, or *pyr*, fire), on account of the brilliant light with which it was supposed to be filled: and the term is still employed as the poetic designation of the realm of eternal glory. Christian Theology assumes the existence of three “heavens;” the first is the region of the terrestrial atmosphere and the clouds; the second is the space in which the stars perform their revolutions; the third, above the region occupied by the stars, is the dwelling-place of the Most High, abode the elect, who behold the Almighty “face to face.” It is in accordance with this classification that St. Paul is said to have been “caught up into the third heaven.”

2. These different doctrines, respecting the abode of the blest, are based on two erroneous assumptions, viz.: — first, that the Earth is the center of the universe; and, second that the region of stars is limited. And it is beyond the imaginary limit thus assigned to the starry region, that all those doctrines have placed the blissful realm that is supposed to be the dwelling place of the Almighty. But what a strange anomaly is that which relegates to the outskirts of creation the Author and Ruler of all that is, instead of assigning to Him, at least, a position in the center of the universe, whence His thought might radiate in all directions!

3. Physical science, with the inexorable logic of facts and observations, has carried its torch into the depths of the expanse of space around us, and has shown the emptiness of all these theories. The Earth has been proven to be, not the pivot of the universe, but one of the smallest of the bodies that circle through immensity, and our sun itself is now known to be only the center of our planetary system; every star that shines in the boundless expanse of the sky is ascertained to be itself a sun, the center of a system of dependent worlds; and innumerable systems thus revealed to us as moving in an orderly interdependence throughout the boundless regions of infinity are found to be separated by distances incommensurable by our thought, though, to our eye, they seem almost to touch one another. In this view of the universe, governed by eternal laws that proclaim the wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator, the Earth is seen to be only an almost imperceptible speck, and one of the least favored — as regards its physical characteristics and its adaptations to human. Such being the case, the question naturally arises as to why the Almighty should have made it the sole seat of life, the sole habitation of the most favored of His creatures? Everything, on the contrary, tends to show that life is everywhere, and that the human family is as infinite as the universe. Science has proven the existence of worlds

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similar to ours; as God cannot be supposed to have made everything without a purpose, He must necessarily have peopled those worlds with beings capable of administering them.

4. Man's opinions are always proportioned to his knowledge; and the discovery of the constitution of the world around him, like all the other great discoveries of the human mind, has necessarily given a new direction to his ideas. It was inevitable that, through the action of his newly-acquired knowledge, his primitive creeds should undergo considerable modification: "heaven" has been displaced from its former position, for the region of stars, being boundless, can no longer be assigned as its locality. Where, then, is "heaven"? To this question none of the religions of the world can furnish an answer.

Spiritism has come to resolve this enigma showing us what the true destiny of the human beings is. Starting with the nature of humans and the attributes of God, we arrive at the conclusion: that is to say, starting with the known we arrive at the unknown, via logical deduction, without mentioning the direct observations that Spiritism permits us to realize.

5. With the aid of the knowledge thus derived, we have ascertained that man is a compound being, consisting of a body and a spirit; that the spirit is the principal element of this compound existence, its reasoning and intelligent element; that the body is merely a material envelope which is temporarily assumed by the spirit for the accomplishment of his mission upon the Earth and the execution of the labors that are necessary for his advancement. The body, worn out, is destroyed, and the spirit outlives its destruction. Without the spirit, the body is only a mass of inert matter, like an instrument deprived of the arm that made it act. Without the body, the spirit is still itself; that is to say, the essential element of the compound being called man, viz., life and intelligence. On quitting his material envelope the spirit returns to the spirit-world, which he had quitted in order to incarnate himself in a corporeal body.

There is, then, the *corporeal world*, composed of spirits incarnated in corporeal bodies, and the *spirit-world*, composed of spirits who have put off their corporeal body. The beings of the corporeal world, in virtue of their material envelope, are attached to the Earth or to some similar globe; the spirit world is everywhere, around us and in space, and has no boundaries or limits of any kind. In virtue of the fluidic nature of their body envelope, the beings that compose that world instead of creeping laboriously upon the ground transport themselves through space with the rapidity of thought. The death of the body is the rupture of the bonds that held them captive.

6. Spirits are created simple and ignorant, but with the aptitude for acquiring all knowledge, and for progressing in every direction, through the exercise of their free will. Through the progress achieved by them, they acquire new knowledge, new faculties, new perceptions, and, as a consequence of these, new enjoyments unknown to spirits of less advancement; they see, hear, feel, and comprehend, what more backward spirits can neither see, hear, feel, nor comprehend. *The happiness of each spirit is in proportion to the amount of progress accomplished by him; so that, of two spirits, one may be more or less happy than the other, simply as a consequence of his greater or less degree of moral and intellectual advancement, and this, without their being in two different places.* They may be close to one another, and yet one of them may be in utter darkness, while the other is in the midst of resplendent light; just as a blind man and one who sees may be in the same place, and yet the former will be unconscious of the splendors seen by the latter, who perceives the objects which are invisible for the former. *The happiness and unhappiness of the spirits being inherent in the qualities possessed by them, they find that happiness or unhappiness wherever they may be, on the surface of the Earth, in the midst of incarnates, or in space.*

A commonplace comparison will render this difference of situation more comprehensible. If, of two men who are at a concert, one is a trained musician possessing a good ear for music, while the other knows nothing of music and has only a defective ear, the first will derive enjoyment from the concert, while the other will remain unmoved, simply because one of them perceives and understands what makes no impression upon the perceptions of the other. It is thus with all the enjoyments

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experienced by spirits, those enjoyments being proportioned to their aptitude for perceiving them. *The spirit-world is full of splendors, harmonies, and sensations that spirits of low degree, who are still under the influence of materiality, do not perceive, and which are only perceptible, and accessible, to spirits of greater purity.*

7. Progress, among spirits, is only achieved as the fruit of their own labor; but, as they have their free will, they labor more or less actively for their own advancement, according to their will; they thus hasten or retard their own progress, and, consequently, their own happiness. While some of them advance quickly, others stagnate for long ages in the lower ranks. Thus, spirits are always the artisans of their own situation, whether happy or unhappy, according to the words of Christ, “to each according to his works.” A spirit who remains behind has, therefore, only himself to thank for his backwardness; in the same way, he who advances has all the merit of his advancement and the happiness he has conquered appears to him all the greater in consequence.

Perfect happiness is the lot only of the spirits who have attained to perfect purity, in other words, of those whom we designate as *Pure-Spirits*.³ Happiness is only obtained by spirits in proportion as they progress in intelligence and morality. Intellectual progress and moral progress are rarely achieved together, and at the same time; but what a spirit fails to accomplish in one lifetime he accomplishes in another, so that his advancement in each of those two branches of progress is equalized in the long run. It is for this reason that we so often find highly intelligent men who are but slightly advanced in morality, and *vice versa*.

8. Incarnation is necessary to the double progress, intellectual and moral, that has to be accomplished by a spirit; it ensures his intellectual progress by compelling him to employ his activity in the various pursuits of the earthly life, and it ensures his moral progress by making him feel the need which men have for one another. *Social life is the touchstone that reveals the good or bad qualities of a spirit.* Kindness, malevolence, gentleness, violence, charity, selfishness, generosity, avarice, humility, pride, sincerity, hypocrisy, loyalty, and treachery — in a word, all that constitutes human goodness and human badness — find their motive, aim, and stimulus, in the relations of each man with his fellows. If it were possible for a man to live alone, he would have neither vices nor virtues; *for, though isolation may preserve from evil, it also annuls the possibility of goodness.*

9. A single corporeal existence is manifestly insufficient to enable a spirit to acquire all the goodness he lacks, and rid himself of all the evil that is in him. Would it be possible, for an instant, for a savage to attain, in a single incarnation, to the intellectual and moral level of the most advanced European? It is physically impossible for him to do so. Must he, then, remain eternally in ignorance and barbarism, deprived of the enjoyments that can only be reached through the development of the intellectual and moral faculties? The simplest common sense suffices to show us that such a supposition would be the negation, both of the justice and goodness of God and of the law of progress, which is the law of nature. And it is for this reason that God, being supremely just and good, grants to the spirit of each man as many successive existences as he needs for attaining to the perfection which is the aim of his being.

In each new existence, a spirit brings with him, *under the form of natural aptitudes, of intuitive knowledge, of intelligence, and of morality, all the gains that have been made by him in his previous existences. Thus each new existence takes him on a step further upon the road of progress.*⁴

Incarnation is inherent to the condition of the inferiority of the spirit. It is no longer necessary when inferiority is overcome and there is continued progress in the spiritual state or in the physical existences of more advanced worlds that do not maintain earthly materialization.

³ Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*,” Second Part, Chapter 1.

⁴ See footnote, Chap. I., no. 2

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10. In the intervals between his successive incarnations, a spirit return, for a longer or shorter time, into the spirit-world, where he is happy, or unhappy, according to the good or the evil he has done in his previous lives. The life of the spirit-world is the normal state of the spirit, the definitive state towards which he is tending; for it is his spirit that is undying, while the state of incarnation is one of *transition* and of *passage*. It is especially in the spirit-state that he reaps the fruit of the progress accomplished during incarnation; it is also in that state that he prepares for a new struggle with ignorance and evil, and forms the resolutions which he will strive to put into practice in his next return to the discipline of human life.

The spirit progresses also in erraticity,⁵ in which state he acquires special knowledge that he could not acquire upon the Earth, and modifies the ideas acquired by him through his subjection to the actions of matter. The state of incarnation and the spirit-state are for him the source of two kinds of progress, interdependent one of the other; this is why it passes alternatively in these two modes of existence.

11. A spirit may be reincarnated upon the Earth or in other material worlds. Among the latter, there are some which are further advanced than others, and in which the conditions of existence, both physical and moral, are less painful than upon the Earth; but, into those happier worlds, only such spirits are admitted as have arrived at a degree of advancement in harmony with that of those worlds.

Incarnation in worlds of higher degree is, of itself, a reward for the spirits whose efforts have fitted them to share the life of those worlds, the inhabitants that are exempted from the ills and the vicissitudes that we are exposed upon the Earth. Their bodies, being more fluidic, are free from the grossness of earthly flesh, and are not subject to diseases, infirmities, or even to the needs of our present bodily state. Spirits of low degree being excluded from those worlds, their people live together in peace, with no other care than that of effecting the advancement by their intellectual activity. True fraternity reigns in those worlds, because in them selfishness has no existence; true equality reigns in them, because no proud or vain-glorious spirit could obtain admission; and true liberty reigns in them, because, there are no disorders to be repressed, no ambitious tyrants seeking to oppress their weaker brother. In comparison with the Earth, such worlds are paradises, although they are but the temporary resting-places of the spirit, on the road of progress that is leading him up to the attainment of yet higher mode of existence that constitutes the true, definitive life of the soul. The Earth, being as yet a world of low degree, and destined to serve as a place of purification for imperfect spirits, evil necessarily predominates in it, and will continue to do so until the Divine ordering shall make it the abode of spirits of greater advancement than those who are now incarnated in it. It is thus that each spirit, progressing gradually in proportion as he accomplishes his development, arrives at length at the apogee of happiness; but, before attaining to the highest point of perfection, he enjoys increasing degrees of happiness, proportioned to each successive degree of his advancement. It is with the spirit, in this respect, as with a child; in his infancy, he shares the pleasures of childhood, in his youth, those that belong to adolescence, and, when he has attained to man's estate, the riper satisfactions of manhood.

12. The happiness of the perfected spirits is not a state of idle contemplation, which would be, as has frequently been pointed out, merely a state of eternal and wearisome uselessness. Spirit-life, at every degree, is, on the contrary, a state of constant activity, though an activity exempt from fatigue. The most perfect felicity of that life consists in the enjoyment of all the splendors of the creation, which human language is incapable of describing, and of which the most exuberant human imagination would fail to form the remotest conception; —in the knowledge and comprehension of all things; in the absence of every sort of suffering, physical and moral, in an interior satisfaction, a

⁵ Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," Second Part, Chapter 6.

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serenity of soul that nothing can disturb; in the pure and perfect affection which unites all the beings who through the absence of evil and inferior spirits, are beyond the reach of disappointment or annoyance; and, above all, in the vision of God and in the understanding of the sublime mysteries of existence that are unveiled only to those who have rendered themselves worthy of such initiation. The happiness of the fully purified spirits consists also in the exercise of the functions with which they rejoice to be charged. They are the Messiahs, the Messengers of God, for the transmission and the execution of His volitions; they accomplish great missions, preside over the formation of worlds and the maintenance of the general harmony of the universe, glorious posts at which spirits only arrive as the direct result of their perfection. Those only who have reached the highest grade of perfectibility are admitted to have knowledge of the secrets of God, and receive the direct inspiration of His thought, of which they are the immediate representatives.

13. The employments of spirits are proportioned to their advancement, to the knowledge they possess, to their capacities, to their experience, and to the degree of confidence reposed in them by the sovereign Master. In the spirit-world, there is no privilege, no favor that is not the consequence of personal merit; all the arrangements of that higher world are weighed in the scales of absolute justice. The most important missions are confided only to those who are known by God to be, at once, able to fulfill them worthily, and incapable of betraying them or of failing in the accomplishment of the tasks committed to them. While, under the very eye of God, the most worthy that compose the Supreme Council of the Universe are charged with the direction of the various solar systems, and others are charged with the direction of a single planet. After these, in the order of their personal advancement and hierarchical rank, are the spirits who are entrusted with the direction of a single nation, of a single family, of a single individual, are charged to push forward some special branch of progress, or to supervise the various operations of nature, all of which, to the minutest details of the work of creation. In the vast and harmonious unity of creation, there are occupations for all varieties and degrees of capacity, of aptitude, of devotion; occupations that are solicited with ardent desire and accepted with joy and gratitude, because devotion and service are means of advancement for the spirits who aspire to the ineffable felicity of the supreme degree.

14. Besides the great missions that are confided only to spirits of the higher degrees, there are others, of every degree of importance, which are entrusted to spirits of corresponding degrees of advancement; so that every spirit, even those who are incarnate, may be said to have his own—that is to say, *certain duties to perform for the benefit of his fellows*—from the father of a family, on whom is laid the task of bringing forward his children, to the man of genius who endows society with new elements of progress. It is among the spirits who are charged with these missions of secondary importance that weakness, unfaithfulness, and withdrawals often occur, failures in duty that delay the advancement of the individual who is guilty of them, but that have no disturbing effect on the general course of events.

15. Thus all the intelligent beings of the creation assist in carrying on the general work of the universe, whatever the degree of development at which they have arrived, and each of them according to his possibilities; some of them in the state of incarnation, others in the spirit-state. There is activity everywhere; from the bottom of the ladder to the top, all are learning, aiding one another, mutually supporting each other, and holding out a helping hand to assist each other in reaching the summit.

Solidarity is thus established between the spirit-world and the corporeal world, in other words, between spirits and men, between spirits in freedom and spirits in the captivity of the flesh. And thus, too, all true sympathies, all pure and sincere affections are perpetuated, strengthened, and ennobled, through the purification and continuation of the affectionate relationships of spirits.

Life and movement exist in all Universe. There is no corner in the infinite world where someone does not exist; no region that is not constantly traveled by innumerable legions of radiant invisible souls, who are unseen to our coarse senses, but quite visible to those souls who are liberated from the influence of the physical body, and whose sight marvels with overflowing happiness. Everywhere,

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throughout the universe, there is happiness proportioned to the degree of progress achieved, to the greatness of the tasks accomplished; for each spirit carries within himself the elements of his happiness, according to the category in which he is placed by his degree of advancement.

The happiness of spirits depending on their own personal qualities and not on any physical surroundings, it exists wherever there are spirits who are capable of being happy; but there is not, throughout the universe, any fixed and circumscribed region of happiness. Wherever they may be, the pure spirits *are always able to contemplate the Divine Majesty, because God is everywhere.*

16. Happiness, nevertheless, is not simply a matter of personal feeling, for, if it were merely individual, if it could not be shared with others, it would be selfish and incomplete; to be perfect, it requires communion of thought and feeling on the part of those who are able to understand and sympathize with one another. The higher spirits, attracted to each other by similitude of ideas, tastes, and sentiments, form vast homogenous groups, or families, in which each individual radiates his own qualities and receives the serene and beneficent emanations of all the other individuals in the group, whose members sometimes disperse, to occupy themselves with the missions entrusted to them, sometimes assemble at some given point of space, to inform each other of the result of their labors, sometimes gather round a spirit of higher degree, to receive his counsels or his direction.

17. Although spirits are everywhere, the globes of the universe are centers in which they assemble by preference, according to the similarity existing between themselves and those by whom they are inhabited. Globes of great advancement are surrounded by the shining hosts of the higher spirits; around globes of low degree, low and backward spirits swarm in crowds. The Earth is still one of the latter. Each globe has, so to say, its own population of incarnate and discarnate spirits, supplied, for the most part, by the incarnation and discarnation of the same spirits. The population of the various globes is more stable in proportion to their backwardness, because, the lower the globe, the more closely are its spirits attached to matter; it is more floating in the globes of higher degree. But the higher spirits voluntarily quit the splendid worlds which are foci of light and joy, and go to worlds of lower degree, in order to sow therein the germs of progress, to bring consolation and hope to the spirits incarnated in them, to raise the courage of those who are sinking under the trials and struggles of corporeal life; — and they sometimes incarnate themselves in the world whose improvement they wish to help forward, in order to accomplish their undertaking with greater efficiency and success.

18. In the boundless immensity around us, where, then, is “Heaven”? “Heaven” is everywhere; it has no fixed site, no place, no circumscribing limits; the globes of high degree are the last stations on the road which leads to it; virtue opens the gates of that supreme abode; vice bars its entrance.

In contrast with this grand and magnificent view of the universe, which shows us its remotest regions peopled with intelligent inhabitants, which assigns to all the objects of creation a meaning, a purpose, and an aim, how mean, how petty, is the doctrine that limits the human race to an imperceptible point of space, which represents mankind as beginning at a given time, with the world which it inhabits, the career of the race embracing but a moment in eternity! How sad, dark, and chilling is the doctrine that represents the rest of the universe, before, during, and after, the brief episode of the career of the human race, as void of life and movement, an incommensurable desert plunged in eternal silence! How prolific of despair is such a doctrine, presenting to the mind a picture of the small group of the elect, absorbed in perpetual contemplation, while the great majority of the only creatures of immensity are condemned to endless torments! How cruel, for all loving hearts, is such a doctrine, interposing an impassable barrier between the living and the dead! The souls of the elect, in their selfish happiness, think only of their own beatitude; the souls of the damned, in their hopeless eternity of misery, think only of their own despair. Is it strange that selfishness should be rife upon the Earth, when it is presented to mankind as reigning supreme in “Heaven”? And how narrow, how degrading is the idea given by such a doctrine, of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God!

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How grand, how sublime, on the contrary, is the idea that is given to us by Spiritism! What vast horizons does its doctrine open out to the mind! But what proves it to be true? Reason, in the first place; revelation in the second place; and, lastly, its accordance with the scientific progress of the day. Between two doctrines, one which debases, while the other exalts our idea of the attributes of God; — one of which is in contradiction, and the other in harmony with the law of progress that is visible in every department of existence; — one of which remains stationary while the other leads us incessantly forwards, — common sense suffices to show us which is nearest to the truth. In presence of two doctrines thus diametrically opposed to each other, let each inquirer interrogate his own consciousness, his own aspirations, and an inner voice will reply to his inquiry as to which is the true one. The aspirations of mankind are the voice of God and cannot deceive us.

19. But why, then, it may be asked, has God not revealed all truth to mankind, from the beginning? For the same reason which renders it impossible to impart to an infant, the knowledge that is imparted to an adult. The restricted revelation of former ages was sufficient for the needs of the human race in the period for which it was intended; the Divine revelations are always proportioned to the mental and moral capacities of the spirits to whom they are made. *Those who, at the present day, are receiving a fuller revelation are the same spirits who received the more restricted revelation of the earlier ages, but who, since that earlier period, have increased in intelligence.*

Before physical science had revealed to mankind the existence of the living forces of nature, the mechanism of the heavens, the true nature and mode of formation of the Earth, could men have understood the immensity of space and the plurality of the worlds of the universe? Before geology had shown them the constitution of the Earth, could they have dislodged “hell” from its depths, or understood the allegorical meaning of the six days of creation? Before astronomy had discovered the laws which regulate the universe, could they have seen the sky is neither “high” nor “low” in space, and that the sky is neither above the clouds nor bounded by the stars? Before psychological science had come into existence, could they have identified themselves with spiritual life, or have formed to themselves a conception of an existence after death, whether happy or unhappy, otherwise than in connection with some fixed locality and under some physical form? No; comprehending through the senses rather than by thought, the idea of an illimitable universe was too vast for their intelligence; it was needful to reduce the idea of the universe to narrower proportions, in order to bring it within their sphere of vision, deferring its broader presentation to a later period. A partial revelation was useful in the past, and the wisdom of the Providential ordering is shown in this proportioning of its teachings to the needs and capacities of the time in which it was made; but it is insufficient at the present day, and they are wrong who, not taking into account the progress of ideas, imagine that they can hold men of mature age in the lead strings of infancy (Vide *The Gospel According to Spiritism*, Chap. III)

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CHAPTER IV

HELL

**Intuition of future punishments – The Christian Hell imitated from the Hell of the Pagans
Limbo – Picture of the Pagan Hell – Picture of the Christian Heaven**

INTUITION OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS

1. In all ages, man has intuitively believed that his future life will be happy or unhappy according to the good or the evil done by him in the earthly life; but the idea he forms to himself of that future state of existence is always in keeping with the development of his moral sense and with more or less enlightened views of right and wrong at which he has arrived. Thus his idea of the rewards and punishments of the future is always the reflex of his predominant tendencies. Warlike nations make the supreme felicity to consist in the honors done to valor; tribes who live by hunting, in an abundance of game; peoples addicted to sensuality, in voluptuous pleasures. While man remains under the domination of materiality, he can have only an imperfect comprehension of spirit life; he supposes that he will eat and drink, in the other world, as he does in this one, but better things.⁶ At a later period, we find in the beliefs of mankind concerning the future a mixture of spirituality and materiality; and accordingly, besides *a heaven* of contemplative beatitude, man then places *a hell* with its array of physical tortures.

2. Being unable to conceive of anything that he does not see, the man of the primitive period naturally formed his notion of the future based on the present; in order to comprehend the possibility of other modes of existence than those which he saw around him, he would have needed an intellectual development which he could only acquire in the course of ages. The picture that he imagined to himself of the chastisements of the future life was, therefore, only a reflex of the ills of human existence, but deepened and intensified. He brought together, into that picture, all the tortures, all the sufferings, all the afflictions that he saw upon the Earth; in hot climates, he imagined a hell of fire, and, in the cold ones, a hell of ice. The special sense which, at a later period, enables him to comprehend the spiritual world, not being yet developed, he could only conceive of physical penalties; and for this reason, with the exception of some slight differences of form, the “hell” of all religions is the same.

THE CHRISTIAN HELL AN IMITATION OF THE HELL OF THE PAGANS

3. The “Hell” of the Pagans, described and dramatized by the poets of antiquity, is the grandest of the forms that have been assumed by the idea of a *place* of punishments for the souls of men, although its principal features have been perpetuated in the “Hell” of the Christians, which, also, has been sung by their poets. On comparing these two conceptions of the infernal regions, we find them to be closely allied, notwithstanding their differences of names and details; in both, physical fire is the basis of the tortures of the damned, because it is the cause of the most excruciating suffering. But, strange to say, Christians have made their hell, in many respects, still more horrible than that of the

⁶ A little Savoyard, to whom the village priest was describing the delights of the future life, asked him whether everybody “eat white bread there, as they do in Paris?”

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Pagans. The latter had their hell the Sieve of the Danaides, Ixion's Wheel, the Stone of Sisyphus, etc.; but these were merely torments of individuals, whereas the Christian hell has its boiling cauldrons for the vast majority of the human race, and the Christian "angels" lift up the covers of those receptacles to feast their eyes with the contortions of the damned,⁷ which are also watched by the "elect" with lively satisfaction,⁸ while their God hears, unmoved, the groans that will ascend, throughout eternity, from the bottomless pit! The Pagans never depicted the dwellers in the Elysian Fields as gloating over the horrors of Tartarus.

4. Like the Pagans, the Christians have their king of the Infernal Regions, Satan; with this difference, viz., that Pluto, while governing the gloomy realm which had fallen to his share, was not malicious; he retained as captives those who had done wickedly, because it was his mission to do so; but he did not seek to draw men into evil in order to give himself the pleasure of seeing them suffer; whereas Satan recruits his victims everywhere, and takes pleasure in having them tortured by his legions of demons, who are armed with pitchforks for the purpose of stirring them about in the fire. Christian theologians have gravely discussed the nature of the "fire," which burns the damned incessantly, and yet does not consume them; some of them have even gone so far as to inquire whether that fire may not perhaps be of bitumen.⁹ The Christian hell is, therefore, in no respect less horrible than the Pagan hell.

5. The same considerations which led the Ancients to localize the realm of felicity led them also to imagine a place of torment, like the former, fixed, localized, and circumscribed; and, having placed their heaven "on high," they naturally placed their hell "down below," that is to say, in the center of the Earth, of which certain dark and gloomy caverns were supposed to be the entrance. The Christians, also, for a long time, placed the region of perdition in the center of the Earth. Nor were these the only analogies between the Pagan and the Christian conceptions of hell.

The hell of the pagans contained, on the one hand, the Elysian Fields, on the other, Tartarus; Olympus, the dwelling-place of the gods and of deified men, was in the "upper regions." According to *the letter* of the Gospels, Jesus *descended* into Hell, into a region *below the surface of the Earth*, on a mission to rescue the souls who were awaiting his coming. The hell of the Christians, like that of the Pagans, was, therefore, in the beginning, not simply a place of torment, but, like the latter, included "the lower regions." And the Christian heaven, the abode of the angels and the saints, was also, like the Pagan Olympus, up "on high," somewhere beyond the region of the stars, which, as previously remarked, was supposed to be limited.

6. These mixture of Pagan and Christian ideas should cause us no surprise. Jesus could not, at once, destroy beliefs that had taken firm root in the human mind. The men of this day lacked the scientific knowledge that alone could enable them to conceive of the infinity of space and the infinity of worlds. The Earth was, for them, the center of the universe. They knew nothing of its form or of its internal structure; for them, the universe was limited to what they saw around them, and their notions, in regard to the future, could not extend beyond the narrow circle of their knowledge. It was consequently impossible for Jesus to initiate them into the truth of things; and being unwilling, on the other hand, to give the sanction of his authority to the prejudices of his hearers, he abstained from touching on subjects for which they were unprepared. Leaving to time the work of rectifying their ideas, he confined himself to vague allusions to the future happiness of the good, and to the

⁷ A sermon preached, in 1860, by an eminent Catholic divine, at Montpellier, *seat of a University Faculty*.

⁸ "The blessed, without quitting the place they occupy, will yet quit it in a certain manner—through the intelligence and the distinctness of vision with which they are endowed—in order to contemplate the tortures of the damned; and, on seeing these, they will not only *not feel any sorrow*, but they will be overwhelmed with joy and will give thanks to God for their own happiness in witnessing the unutterable misery of the impious."—SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS.

⁹ In a sermon preached in Paris in 1861.

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punishments that await the wicked; but we nowhere find, in his teachings, the distinct pictures of corporeal tortures which the Christians churches have made an article of their creed.

We have seen how it is that the ideas of the Pagan hell have been perpetuated to the present day. The diffusion of knowledge, which is the characteristic of modern times, and the general development of human intelligence, were indispensable to the clearing away of those ideas. But as, up to this time, no sound and rational basis of belief has been substituted in place of those old ideas, the long period of blind belief has been followed by a transitional period of unbelief, to which the new revelation is destined to put an end. It was necessary to demolish the old belief before bringing in the new; for true ideas are more readily accepted by those who have no belief and who feel the need of some sound basis of conviction, than by those who cherish a robust belief in absurdities.

7. Owing to their having localized their idea of “Heaven” and of “Hell,” the various Christian sects have been led to admit the existence of only two situations for the souls of the departed—viz., *perfect happiness* and *utter misery*. Purgatory, according to the Catholic dogma, is only a temporary and intermediate position, where the souls goes without any other transition into the abode of the Blest. It could not do otherwise, according to the belief that assumes that the fate of the soul is decided forever at death. If there are but two abodes for souls, —viz., that of the elect and that of the damned, —and if the fate of the soul, as belonging to the one or the other category, is definitely settled at death it is impossible to admit the existence of degrees in either of those abodes; for, if such degrees existed, it must be possible for the soul to pass through them, and, consequently, to progress: but, if the soul can progress after death, its state, on dying, is not definitive, since, if it were definitive, progress would be impossible. Jesus settled this weighty question when he said, “*In my Father’s house are many mansions.*”¹⁰

LIMBO

8. The Catholic Church admits, it is true, a special position of the soul in certain special cases. Children, who have died in infancy, having committed no sin, cannot be condemned to eternal burning; on the other hand, having done nothing good, they have no right to the supreme felicity. They are, therefore, according to the doctrine of that Church, in *Limbo*, which is a mixed state (that has never been clearly defined), in which, although they do not suffer, they still do not enjoy *perfect happiness*. But, since their fate is irrevocably fixed at death, they are excluded from the enjoyment of perfect happiness to all eternity; and, consequently, this privation, though incurred through no fault of theirs, practically amounts to the undeserved infliction of an *eternal punishment*. It is the same with savages, who, having received neither the grace of baptism nor the light of religion, go wrong through ignorance, and through obeying their natural instincts, and who, consequently, can neither have incurred the guilt, nor acquired the merit of those who have acted with a clear discernment of right and wrong. The simplest effort of reasoning suffices to repel such a doctrine as contrary to the justice of God. The justice of God, on the contrary, is summed up entirely in the words of Christ, “*To each, according to the deeds done in the body;*” but this law must be understood as referring to *deeds whether good or evil, that have been done freely and voluntarily*; those being the only ones for which we can justly be held responsible. There can be no responsibility on the part of a child, a savage, or any one else who, through no fault of his own, has failed to obtain enlightenment.

¹⁰ Vide “*The Gospel According to Spiritism*,” chap. III

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PICTURE OF THE PAGAN HELL

9. We know little of the Pagan Hell except through the recitals of the ancient poets; the descriptions given by Homer and Virgil are the most complete, but, in these, we have to make allowance for the necessities imposed by the poetic form. On the contrary, the description of the infernal regions given by Fénelon, in his *Telemachus*—though drawn, as regards the fundamental beliefs of the Ancients, from the same sources—has the greater simplicity and precision of prose. Even while describing the lugubrious aspect of those regions, he takes care to show the *kind* of suffering endured by the guilty; and, if he gives special prominence to the fate of bad kings, he does so for the sake of impressing the mind of his royal pupil with the gravity of the responsibility that will one day rest upon him. However popular the work referred to, there are doubtless many who have not retained any clear remembrance of its details, or who have not reflected on them with sufficient attention to establish a comparison between the idea of “Hell” thus presented and the “Hell” of the Christians; and we therefore think it useful to reproduce portions of the work referred to which treat directly of the subject we are considering, that is to say, of *the punishment of the individuals in the other life*.

10. On entering, Telemachus heard the groans of a shade who appeared to be inconsolable. ‘What,’ he inquired, ‘is the cause of you unhappiness? Who were you when upon the Earth?’

‘I was Nabopharzam, king of proud Babylon,’ replied the shade; ‘all the people of the East trembled at the mere sound of my name. I caused myself to be adored by the Babylonians in a marble temple wherein I was represented by a statue of gold, before which were burned, night and day, the most precious perfumes of Ethiopia. Whoever dared to contradict me was immediately punished; and my servants invented new pleasures each day in order to render my life more and more delightful. I was still young and robust; alas! How many kinds of prosperity still remained for me to enjoy upon the throne! But a woman whom I loved, and who did not love me, has shown me very plainly that I was not a god; she has poisoned me; and I am reduced to nothingness. My ashes were placed, with great pomp, yesterday, in a golden urn; the people wept, and tore their hair; they made a pretense of longing to throw themselves into the flame of my funeral pyre, in order to die with me. They will come in crowds to groan and lament at the foot of the superb tomb in which my ashes have been deposited; but no one regrets my death; my memory is detested, even by my own family, and, down here, I am already undergoing horrible treatment.’

Telemachus, touched by this spectacle, asked the shade: ‘Were you really happy during your reign? Did you feel the inner peace without which the heart remains oppressed and blighted in the midst of pleasures?’

‘No,’ replied the Babylonian; ‘I know nothing of the sentiment of which you speak. The sages praise this peace as the only good; but I never felt it; my heart was incessantly agitated by new desires, new fears, and new hopes. I sought to stun myself with the shock of my passions, and I did my utmost to render this sort of intoxication perpetual. The shortest interval of calm reason would have been too bitter an awakening. Such is the only peace I ever enjoyed; any other seems to me to be only a fable and a dream; such are the pleasures I regret.’

While speaking thus, the Babylonian wept like a craven, who, weakened by prosperity, has not accustomed himself to support misfortune with equanimity. Near him were several slaves who had been put to death to honor his funeral; Mercury had delivered them over to Charon with their king, and had given them absolute power over this sovereign whom they had served upon the Earth. *These shades of slaves no longer feared the shade of Nabopharzam; they kept him in chains, and wreaked upon him the most galling insults.* One of them said to him, ‘Were we not men just as you? How could you be so insensate as to fancy yourself a god, and ought you not to have remembered that you were of the same race as other men?’ Another, to mortify him, said to him, ‘You were right in trying to make people believe that you were not a man; for you were a monster, with nothing human about

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you!’ A third scornfully asked him, ‘Where are now your flatterers? Wretch! You have no longer anything to give. You can no longer do harm to anyone. You have become the slave of your former slaves. The gods are slow to punish; *but they punish at last!*’

At these cruel words, Nabopharzam threw himself down with his face upon the ground, tearing his hair in a fit of rage and despair. But Charon said to the slaves, ‘Pull him up by his chain; make him stand up in spite of himself; *he shall not even have the satisfaction of hiding his shame.* All the shades on the banks of the Styx must witness his punishment in order that they may recognize the justice of the gods, who allowed this impious mortal to reign so long upon the Earth.’

“Soon afterwards Telemachus perceived, near at hand, the gloomy realm of Tartarus that exhaled a thick black smoke, the pestiferous smell of which would have caused death, had it penetrated into the abode of the living. This smoke rose from a river of fire, and was full of masses of flame, the roar of which, like that of the most impetuous torrents when they leap from the summit of the highest rocks into the deepest abysses, rendered it impossible to hear anything distinctly in the dreary place.

Telemachus, secretly urged on by Minerva, entered fearlessly into the yawning gulf. He at once perceived in it a great number of men who had lived on Earth in low conditions, and who were being punished for having sought to obtain wealth through frauds, treasons, and cruelties. He remarked there many impious hypocrites who, feigning to love religion, had made their pretended piety a pretext for serving their ambition and deceiving the credulous; these men, who had thus insulted virtue itself, the greatest gift of the gods, were punished as being the very worst of criminals. Children who had murdered their parents, husbands who had killed their wives, traitors who, breaking their vows, had betrayed their country, underwent punishments less severe than those who meted out to these hypocrites. The three judges of the infernal regions had thus ordered it, and for this reason, viz., that hypocrites are not satisfied with being wicked, like other impious people, but also seek to pass themselves off as being good, and thus, by their false virtue, make it impossible for men to trust the truest virtue. The gods, whom they have mocked, take pleasure in employing all their power to avenge the insults of these wretches.

Near to these were the shades of other men whom the vulgar scarcely regard as guilty, but who are pitilessly pursued by the Divine vengeance, viz., those who are ungrateful, liars, flatterers of vice, malicious critics who have sought to malign the good, and those who have rashly pronounced judgment on matters of which they had no clear and thorough knowledge, and who have thus injured the reputation of innocent persons.

Telemachus, seeing the three judges seated at their tribunal, in the act of passing sentence on a man, ventured to inquire of them what crimes he had committed, when the condemned immediately exclaimed, ‘I have never done anything wrong; all my pleasure was in doing good. I was magnificent, liberal, just, and compassionate; with what then can I be reproached?’ But Minus replied, ‘You are not reproached with any wrongdoing as regards to men; but did you not owe yet more to the gods than to men? What is the justice of which you boast? You have not failed in any of your duties towards men, who are nothing; you were virtuous, but you took all the credit of your virtue to yourself, instead of attributing it to the gods, who had given it to you, for you wished to enjoy the fruit of your virtue as something of your own and you thus shut yourself up in yourself; *you were your own divinity.* But the gods, who are the authors of all things, and to whom the honor of all things should revert, cannot renounce their rights; you forgot them, they will now forget you. They now give you over to yourself, since you chose to live for yourself instead of living for them. *You must now find your happiness, if you can, in your own heart.* You are separated, forever, from those whom you sought to please, and you are left alone with yourself, the self which was your idol; for you have now to learn that there can be no true virtue without the respect and love of the gods, to whom all things are due. Your false virtue, which has so long deceived men, who is easily taken in, will now be seen in its true light. Men, judging of vices and virtues only according to the convenience or inconvenience caused to them

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thereby, are blind to the real nature of good and of evil. Here, all their superficial judgments are overthrown by the Divine light, for that light often condemns what is admired by men, and shows the excellence of what is condemned by them.’

At these words, the vainglorious philosopher was struck, as though by the thunderbolt, with horror of himself. The pleasure that he had formerly felt contemplating his own moderation, his courage, and his generous tendencies, was changed into despair. The sight of his own heart, as an enemy of the gods, became a torture for him; he saw himself as a spectacle of which he could never escape the sight; he saw the worthlessness of the judgment of men, whose approbation had been the aim and motive of all his actions. An entire revolution took place in his inner being, as though his very entrails had been overturned. He seemed to himself to be no longer the same; his heart failed him; and his conscience—whose flatteries had hitherto been so agreeable to him—now raised its voice against him, reproaching him bitterly with the unsound and illusory nature of his imaginary virtues, that had not had the worship of the Divinity for their motive and aim: he was overwhelmed with confusion, consternation, shame, remorse, and despair. *The Furies exercised no torments upon him, because it sufficed, for his punishment, to abandon him to himself*, and because the action of his own heart was all that was needed to avenge the gods, whom he had forgotten. He tried to find some dark recess in which to hide himself, at least, from the shades about him, since he could no longer hide himself *from himself*. *He sought for darkness, but could not find it*, for an unwelcome and persistent light incessantly accompanied him; wherever he went, the piercing rays of truth went with him, avenging the truth that he had neglected to follow.¹¹ All that he had formerly loved became odious to him, as being the source of his misery;—a misery that would have no end!

‘Insensate fool that I have been!’ he cried aloud, speaking to himself; ‘I see that I have never truly known either the gods, my fellow-men, or myself! No, I have never truly known anything, since I did not set my affections on the only real good! Every step of my life was but a wandering out of the right road; my wisdom was only folly; my virtue was only a blind and impious pride; I was my own idol!’

Telemachus next perceived the Kings who had been condemned for having made a bad use of their power. On the one hand, an avenging Fury held up before them *a mirror that showed them all the deformity of their vices*; they saw, and could not help seeing, their gross vanity and their avidity for the most ridiculous praises; their hardness towards their fellow-men, whose happiness they ought to have ensured; their indifference for the virtuous; their unwillingness to hear the truth; their preference for base and cowardly flatterers; their want of application; their indolence and idleness; their unjust suspicions; their pomp and magnificence based on the ruin of their peoples; their ambition, which caused them to purchase a little empty glory with the blood of their subjects; their cruelty, which sought, each day, for new delights in the tears and despair of their innumerable victims. They beheld themselves incessantly in this mirror; they saw themselves to be more horrible and monstrous than was the Chimaera, vanquished by Bellerophon, or the Hydra destroyed by Hercules, or even Cerberus himself, though, from his three yawning mouths, he vomits streams of black and venomous blood that would poison the whole race of mortals living upon the Earth.

At the same time, on the other hand, another Fury repeated, insultingly, all the praises that had been offered to them by their flatterers during their life, and held up to them a second mirror, in which they beheld themselves as they had been depicted by these flatterers. The contrast between these pictures was torture for their vanity, and all the more excruciating because the kings on whom the

¹¹ Vide Chap. VII, “*The Punishment of Light*.”

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most magnificent encomiums are lavished during their life, are usually those who are the most wicked of all; for wicked kings are always more feared than the good ones, and have no scruple in exacting base adulation from the poets and orators of their day.

The groans of these wretches resound through the thick darkness by which they are surrounded, and which allows them to perceive only the insults and mockeries they are condemned to endure. Everything around them repels, contradicts, and confounds them, whereas, when they lived upon the Earth, they sported with the lives of men and imagined that everything existed for their service. In Tartarus, they are abandoned to the caprices of their former slaves, who, in their turn, cause them to feel all the bitterness of slavery; they serve these tormentors in pain and suffering, and without any hope of a mitigation of their misery, for they are subjected to the blows and ill-treatment of their former victims, as completely as is the anvil to the strokes of the hammer of the Cyclops, when Vulcan urges them to their tasks in the fiery furnaces of Etna.

Pale, hideous, filled with consternation, were the countenances of the criminals seen by Telemachus in that abode of retribution. Gnawed by despair, they are objects of horror to themselves, and can no more shake off this sense of self-loathing than they can shake off their own nature; *they need no other chastisement, for their former crimes, than those crimes themselves, which are beheld by them incessantly, in all their deformity, glowering on them, and pursuing them, like so many horrible specters.* To escape from them, they seek for a death that shall be more potent than that which has separated them from their body. In their despair, they would call to their help a death that should extinguish in them all feeling and all consciousness; they call upon the abyss to swallow them up and hide them from the avenging rays of truth that pierce them like arrows, but they are condemned to suffer the vengeance that falls slowly upon them, drop by drop, as from a spring that will never be dried up. *Truth, which they formerly shunned, is now their torment;* they see it, and it alone, always standing before them as an accusation: a sight that pierces them through and through, that rends them, as it were, limb from limb, and tears them from themselves. For Truth is like lightning; without destroying them outwardly, it penetrates the most hidden recesses of their being.

Among these lugubrious spectacles, which caused the hair of his head to stand on end, Telemachus beheld the fate of several of the ancient kings of Lydia, punished for having preferred the pleasures of an idle and luxurious life to the noble labor, for the amelioration of the condition of the mass of their subjects, which should be the inseparable from the royalty.

Those kings reproached each other with their former blindness. One of them, addressing the other, who had been his son, exclaimed, ‘Did I not urge you, repeatedly, in my old age, and before my death, to repair the evils that I had caused by my negligence?’ ‘Ah! Wretched father!’ returned the son, ‘it is you who have been my ruin! It was your example that inspired me with the love of vainglorious pomp and voluptuous delights, with pride, and hard-heartedness for the rest of mankind! It was through seeing you reign with such luxurious indolence and surrounded by base flatterers, that I acquired the love of pleasure and of flattery. I thought that all other men, in relation to kings, were only what horses and other beasts of burden are in relation to men; that is to say, animals which one only cares for the services they render and the uses they sub-serve. I believed this, because you made me believe it; and now I suffer all this misery for having followed your example!’ To these reciprocal reproaches they added the most frightful curses, and manifested such violent rage against one another that they seemed to be about to tear each other to pieces.

Around these unfaithful kings there hovered, like so many birds of night, the cruel suspicions, the baseless terrors and mistrust, which avenge, upon them, the sufferings caused to their subjects by their hard-heartedness; —the insatiable thirst for riches, the tyrannous desire for false glory, and the base indolence that intensifies every suffering, while incapable of yielding any solid satisfaction.

Many of these kings were seen undergoing severe punishment, not for any evil that they had done, but *for not having done the good that they might have done.* All the wrongdoing, on the part of their subjects, caused by their lax administration of the laws, was laid to the charge of the kings, who

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only reign in order that the laws may reign through their instrumentality. All the disorders that result from the display of pomp, luxury, and all the other excesses that tempt men to violate the laws in their haste to be rich, were imputed to these unfaithful kings. And those kings, who, instead of being the kind and watchful shepherds of their people, had only sought to devour them, like hungry wolves, were the most severely punished of them all.

But what most astounded Telemachus was to see, in this abyss of darkness and of suffering, a great number of kings who, although they had been reputed, upon the Earth as tolerably good, had been condemned to the sufferings of Tartarus for having allowed themselves to be governed by wicked and artful counselors. *They were punished by the evils that they had allowed to be done under their authority.* Moreover, the greater number of these kings had been neither good nor bad, weakness having been their distinguishing characteristic. They had never had any desire to know the truth; they had never had any aspirations after virtue; and they had never taken any pleasure in doing good.

PICTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN HELL

11. The opinion of Christian theologians in regard to Hell is summed up in the following quotations.¹² This description, derived from the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the Lives of Saints, may be presented with all the more confidence as conveying a correct idea of the orthodox belief in regard to the subject we are considering, because it is perpetually set forth, with some slight variations only, in the sermons of Protestant divines, as well as in the pastoral teachings of Catholic priests.

12. “Demons are purely spiritual beings, and the damned, who are now in hell, may also be considered as purely spiritual beings, because it is only their soul that is in hell, for their bones, returned to dust, are being incessantly transformed into grass, plants, fruit, minerals, and liquids, undergoing, unconsciously, the continual metamorphoses of matter. But the damned, like the Saints, will be resuscitated at the Last Day, and will again put on, nevermore to be cast off, a fleshly body, the same body by which they were known during their earthly life. What will distinguish the one class from the other is that the elect will be raised with a purified radiant body, and the damned, with a body degraded and deformed by sin. There will then be no longer in hell purely spiritual beings only; for there will be in it men, such as we now are. Hell is, therefore, *a place*, physical, geographical, material, since it will be peopled with terrestrial creatures, having feet, hands, a mouth, a tongue, teeth, ears, eyes, like ours, and veins with blood in them, and nerves capable of feeling pain.

“Where is hell situated? Certain doctors of the Church have placed it in the entrails of the Earth itself; others, in some planet; but the question has never been decided by any Council. We are, therefore, in regard to this point, reduced to conjectures; the only thing that is affirmed in regard to it is that hell, whatever the part of the universe in which it is situated, is a world composed of material elements, but a world without sun, without moon, without stars; more gloomy, more inhospitable, more utterly devoid of every germ and appearance of good, than are the most inhospitable regions of the world in which men are now sinning.

“Christian theologians prudently abstain from painting, after the fashion of the Egyptians, the Hindus, and the Greeks, all the horrors of that abode; they confine themselves to showing us, as a sample, the little that the Scriptures unveiled to us in regard to it; the lake of fire and brimstone of the Apocalypse; the worms of Isaiah, that are for ever writhing on the carcasses of Tophet; demons, tormenting the men they have brought to perdition; and men, weeping and gnashing their teeth, according to the statements of the Evangelists.

¹² Vide “*L’Enfer*,” by AUG. CALLET.

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“Saint Augustine does not admit that these miseries can be regarded as merely physical images of moral sufferings; he sees, in a real lake of sulphur, real worms and real scorpions attacking every part of the bodies of the damned and adding their stings to those of the fire. He asserts, basing this assertion on a verse of Saint Mark, that this wondrous fire, although as material in its nature as the fire we know upon the Earth, and although it will act for ever upon material bodies, will preserve the bodies of its victims as salt preserves flesh. But the damned, perpetually sacrificed and yet perpetually living, will feel the agony of this fire that burns without destroying; *it will penetrate under their skin*; they will be soaked and saturated with it in all their limbs, and in the marrow of their bones, and in the pupils of their eyes, and in the most secret and sensitive fibers of their being. The crater of a volcano, could they throw themselves into it, would be for them, in comparison with the fire of hell, a cool and refreshing resting place.

“Thus speak, with the fullest confidence, the most timid, most discreet, and the most reserved theologians. They do not deny that hell has other kinds of corporeal torments; they only say that they have not a sufficient kind of knowledge of these to warrant their speaking of them, or, at least, as positively as they are able to do in regard to the horrible torture of fire and the disgusting torture of worms. But there are other theologians, bolder, or more enlightened, who give, in regard to hell, descriptions that are more detailed, more varied, and more complete; and, although it is not known in what region of space hell is situated, there are saints that have seen it. They did not enter its gloomy portals carrying a lyre in their hands, like Orpheus, or a sword, like Ulysses; they were transported thither in spirit. Saint Theresa is one of those who have thus beheld it.

“It would seem, according to the recital of that Saint, that there are cities in hell; at all events, she saw a sort of narrow alley, such as those which are so often found in old towns. She entered this alley, stepping, with horror and loathing, upon the muddy, filthy, and stinking ground, covered with monstrous reptiles; but her progress was speedily arrested by a wall which barred the alley, and in this wall was a niche, in which Saint Theresa placed herself, without quite understanding why, or how, she did so. It was, she said, the place reserved for her, if she made ill use, during her earthly life, of the grace so abundantly shed by God, on her cell at Avila. Although she had entered, with wonderful facility, into this niche, she could neither sit, nor lie, nor stand upright in it; still less could she get out of it: the horrible walls had closed in upon her on all sides, enveloping her whole person in a stony shroud, and pressing in upon her, as though they were alive. It was as though she were being stifled, strangled, and, at the same time, flayed alive, and chopped into pieces; she felt as though she were being burned, and experienced, at once, every species of torture and anguish. As for obtaining any help, none was to be hoped for; around her there was nothing but thick darkness, and nevertheless, through this darkness she still, to her utter amazement, beheld the hideous alley in which she was kept a prisoner, and all the vile and filthy creatures about her; a spectacle fully as intolerable for her as the pressure of her prison walls.¹³

“The alley thus seen was, doubtless, only a little corner of Hell. Other spiritual travelers have been favored with wider views of it, and have seen within its precincts, vast cities all on fire; Babylon, and Nineveh, and Rome itself, with their palaces and temples, wrapped in flames, and all their inhabitants chained, each to his place, in the midst of the burning; the dealer at his counter, priests and courtesans in the halls of festivity, shrieking on the seats from which they could never again get loose, and lifting to their lips, to quench their torturing thirst, wine cups that vomited flames; lackeys on their knees in burning sewers, and princes, upon whom there flowed, from the hands of those lackeys, a devouring lava-stream of molten gold. Others have beheld, in Hell, enormous plains that were being dug and sown by armies of famishing peasants, and as these plains, steaming with their sweat, and this sterile seed produced nothing, the starving peasants devoured one another, after which, as numerous,

¹³ This vision presents, so distinctly, all the characteristics of nightmare, that Saint Theresa's experience may doubtless be regarded as of that nature.

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lean, and famishing as before, they wandered off in bands, towards every part of the horizon, seeking in vain for some more favored region, while their place were taken, at once, by other wandering columns of the damned. Other saints, again, have seen in Hell mountains full of precipices, groaning forests, wells without water and fountains fed with tears, rivers of blood, whirlwinds of snow in deserts of ice, boats full of shipwrecked wretches blown hopelessly about, on shoreless seas. In short, all these seers have seen, in Hell, all that the Pagans formerly saw in it, viz., a lugubrious reflex of the Earth, a shadow, incommensurably magnified of its miseries, with its natural sufferings rendered infinite and eternal, even to its dungeons and its gallows, and all the instruments of torture that our own hands have forged.

“There are, moreover, in Hell, demons who, in order to more thoroughly torture the fleshly bodies of the damned, take upon themselves bodies of flesh. Some of these have wings like bats, horns, scaled, sharp claws, and pointed teeth; they are described to us as being armed with swords, pitchforks, pincers, red-hot nippers, saws, gridirons, bellows, and clubs, and as discharging throughout eternity the functions of cooks and of butchers of human flesh; others, transformed into enormous lions or vipers, incessantly drag their human prey about in solitary caverns; others, again, changing themselves into crows, peck out forever the eyes of some of the guilty, or, taking the form of winged dragons, carry them away upon their backs, terrified, bleeding, shrieking, athwart vast wastes of darkness and then shake them off into the lake of brimstone. Some of these demons present the appearance of clouds of gigantic grasshoppers and scorpions of which the sight causes shuddering, the smell, the nausea, the slightest touch, convulsions; others assume the form of many-headed open-throated voracious monsters, whose hideous faces are surmounted by manes of snakes, that crunch the reprobate in their gory jaws and then vomit them out again crushed and formless, but living, because they are immortal.

“These demons, with forms perceptible to the senses, and that so nearly resemble the gods of the Amenthi and of Tartarus, and the idols worshipped by Phoenicians, the Moabites, and the other Gentiles around Judea, do not act from their own caprice; each of them has his own function and his own work, and the tortures they inflict in Hell, are in close connection with the crimes they have inspired, and caused to be committed upon the Earth.¹⁴ The damned are punished in all their senses and in all their organs, because they have offended God by all their senses and by all their organs; they are punished in different ways according to the nature of their sins, they are punished as gluttons by the demons of gluttony, as lazy, by the demons of laziness, as fornicators, by the demons of fornication, and in as many other ways as there are different ways of sinning. They will freeze in burning and burn in freezing; they will hunger for rest while hungering for movement; they will be always hungry, always thirsty, a thousand-fold more weary than the weariest slave at the close of day, more diseased than the dying, more broken, more bruised, more covered with wounds, than the martyrs, and they will continue to exist forever and ever.

“No demon ever yet tired, or ever will tire of his hideous task. All the demons are in regard to the work appointed to them, thoroughly disciplined and faithful in executing *the avenging orders they have received*, were it otherwise, what would become of hell? The victims would obtain relief if their executioners quarreled among themselves or wearied of their work. But there is no relief for the former because there is no quarreling among the latter; however wicked they are, however innumerable, the demons have a perfect understanding with one another throughout the length and breadth of the abyss, and there have never seen, upon the earth, nations more docile to their princes, armies more obedient to their chiefs, monastic communities more humbly submissive to their

¹⁴ A strange sort of punishment, in sooth, which consists in enabling these demons to continue, upon a wider scale, the evil done by them upon the Earth! It would be more reasonable for them to be made to suffer themselves the consequences of that evil than to be allowed to gratify themselves by inflicting suffering on those whom they have led astray.

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superiors, than are the demons to their rulers, from one end of hell to the other.¹⁵

“We know, however, but little of the populace of Demondom, of the vile spirits who make up the legions of vampires, ghouls, toads, scorpions, crows, hydras, salamanders, and other beasts that have no name for us, and that constitute the fauna of the infernal regions; but we know and have the names of many of the princes who command those legions, among others, Belphegor, the Demon of incontinence; Abaddon or Apollyon, the Demon of murder; Beelzebub, the Demon of impure desires, Master of the flies that engender corruption; Mammon, of avarice; and Moloch, and Belial, and Baal, and Ashtaroth, and many others; and, above these, their universal chief, the somber archangel who bore, in Heaven, the name of Lucifer, and who bears, in Hell the name of Satan.

“Such, in brief, is the idea which is given us of hell, considered from the point of view of its physical nature and of the physical sufferings of which it is the theater. Open the writings of the Fathers and the ancient Doctors of the Church; interrogate our pious legends; examine the carvings and the paintings of our churches; listen to what is said in our pulpits, and you will learn many particulars in regard to it.”

13. The author from whom we are quoting follows up the foregoing picture with the following reflections, the importance of which will be easily perceived by the reader:

“The resurrection of the body is in itself a miracle; but God will work a second miracle in giving to the mortal bodies thus raised—bodies that have already been worn out by the passing trials of life, that have already been annihilated—the power to subsist, without dissolving in a furnace in which all the metals would be converted to vapor. If it be urged that the soul is its own executioner, that God does not persecute the sinner but abandons him to the state of misery he has brought upon himself by his own choice, that statement may be admitted as true, although the eternal abandonment of a lost and suffering being would seem to be but little in conformity with the goodness of the Creator; but what may be admissible in regard to the soul and to spiritual sufferings cannot be, in any degree, admissible in regard to the resuscitated bodies and corporeal suffering of the damned. In order that these sufferings may be perpetuated throughout eternity, it is not enough that God should withdraw His hand; it is necessary, on the contrary, that He should show His hand that He should intervene, that He should act; for, without the constant action of His power in maintaining their existence, those bodies would be immediately destroyed.

“Theologians, therefore, assume that God operates, after the resurrection, the second miracle to which we have just referred. He draws, in the first place, from the sepulcher that has devoured them, our bodies of clay. He raises them, from the grave, such as they were when they were committed to its keeping, with all their original infirmities and all the degradations they have successively undergone from age, vice, and disease; He gives them back to us in that state, decrepit, shivering, gouty, full of physical needs, sensitive to the sting of the minutest insect, covered with the ignoble stains that our life and our death have left in them; this is the first miracle. Next, to these weak wretched bodies, ready to crumble away into the dust from which they have been taken, He imparts a property that they never before possessed; and this is the second miracle: that is to say, He inflicts upon them the gift of immortality, that same gift which, in His anger—or, should we not rather say, in His mercy? — He withdrew from Adam when the latter was driven out of Eden.

“While Adam remained immortal, he was invulnerable; and, when he ceased to be invulnerable, he became mortal: death followed close upon the heels of pain.

¹⁵ Those demons, rebellious to God’s goodness, present an exemplary mildness to practice evil. None of them display ill will throughout eternity. What a strange metamorphosis took place. They were created pure and as perfect as angels! Is it not odd for the demons to be examples of perfect harmony, comprehension and unalterable agreement, while humans do not know how to live in peace and mutually tear each one apart? Viewing the amount of punishment reserved for the condemned and comparing their situation, which are more deserving of compassion more our pity, the criminals or their victims?

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“The resurrection, then, does not restore to us either the physical conditions of the innocent man or the physical conditions of the guilty man; it is a resurrection only of our miseries, but with the addition of new miseries infinitely more horrible; it is, in fact, and as regards the immortality of the bodies thus raised, *a new creation*, and the most malicious act the human imagination has ever dared to conceive of. God alters His mind and, in order to add to the spiritual torments of sinners fleshly torments that shall endure forever, He suddenly changes by an act of His power, the laws and properties that He Himself assigned in the beginning, to all bodies formed from matter: He resuscitates diseased and rotten flesh, and joining in an indestructible union, the material elements which tend spontaneously to separate from each other, He maintains and perpetuates this living rotteness; He throws it into the fire, not in order to purify it, but to preserve it just as it is, sensitive, suffering, burning, horrible, and in this state by His will, He renders it immortal.

“By attributing such a miracle to God, Christian theologians represent Him as one of the executioners of Hell; for, although the damned can only attribute their spiritual sufferings to themselves, they can only attribute their fleshly sufferings to a direct exercise of His power. It is not enough apparently, for God to abandon the souls of the guilty after their death, to sorrow, to remorse, to the anguish of knowing that they have shut themselves out from happiness forever; His power, according to theologians, pursues them through the darkest recesses of this abyss of horror, seeks them out from this night of misery and drags them back, for a moment, to the light of day, not to console them, but to clothe them with a hideous, putrid, flaming, but imperishable body, more pestiferous than the robe of Dejanira; and it is only when He abandons them to their fate.

“But, no; He does not, even then, simply leave them to their fate; for Hell only subsists, like the Earth, like Heaven, in virtue of a permanent action of His will, and, like them, would vanish into nothingness if He ceased to sustain its existence. His hand will therefore be laid upon the damned, throughout eternity, to prevent their fire from burning itself out and their bodies from being consumed; and He will do this, incessantly, in order that the sight of the perennial tortures of these wretched beings, thus cursed by Him with immortality, may intensify the happiness of the elect.”

14. We have said, and with truth, that the Hell of the Christians is more hideous than that of the Pagans. In Tartarus, we see the souls of the guilty, tortured by remorse, perpetually confronted with their crimes and their victims; we see them fleeing from the light which transpierces them, and seeking in vain to hide themselves from the sight of those whose glance follows them wherever they go. Their pride is abased and mortified; each of them bears the stigma of his past; each is punished by the recoil of his own evil deeds, and so certainly that for a great number of them, it is judged to be quite enough to leave them to themselves, without adding any other chastisements. But they are *shades*, that is to say, *souls clothed upon with their fluidic bodies only, image of their terrestrial existence*; we do not see, in the Pagan Hell, *men* re-clothed with their fleshly body, in order that they may be harrowed with the additional misery of physical suffering, nor any material fire “penetrating under their skin and saturating them with physical agony to the very marrow of their bones,” nor the lavish variety and ingenious refinements of the tortures that constitute the basis of the Christian Hell. We find, in Tartarus, judges who are inflexible but *just*, and who apportion the severity of the punishment to the degree of the faultiness for which it is inflicted; whereas, in the empire of Satan, all are subjected to the same tortures, and all these tortures are based on physical suffering; everything else is banished, including equity.

Undoubtedly there are, at the present day, and even in the churches themselves, many sensible men who do not accept these descriptions of Hell as literally true, and who regard them as being only allegories which are to be interpreted in a spiritual sense; but the opinion of such persons is merely individual, and is not the rule. The belief in a physical Hell, with all the consequences implied in that belief, is nonetheless, even at the present day, an article of the Christian creed.

15. It may be asked, “If these horrors do not really exist, how can they have been seen by ecstasies, even in a state of trance?” This is not the place for explaining the source of the fantastic

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images that are sometimes produced to the consciousness of the spirit, with all the appearances of reality.¹⁶ We can here only remark that the fact of their production proves the truth of the principle laid down by us,¹⁷ viz., that trance is the least reliable of all the modes of revelation, because this state of super-excitement is not always the result of a complete disengagement of the soul from the body, but is often complicated with reflexes of the subjects with which the mind of the seer has been busied in his waking state. The ideas that have been assimilated by the spirit of the seer, and of which his physical brain, or, rather, the perispiritual envelope corresponding to the brain has preserved the impress, are reproduced in trance but distorted as though in a mirage under vaporous and shadowy forms that cross each other, blend together, and make up unreal and fantastic pictures. The visions of ecstasies of all religions are always conformed to the religious belief with which they are imbued; and it is therefore not surprising that those who, like Saint Theresa, are strongly imbued with theological ideas of Hell, as conveyed by verbal or written descriptions and by paintings, should have visions which are, properly speaking, only the reproduction of these ideas and which partake of the nature of nightmare. A Pagan ecstatic, if he believed in the creed of his day would have seen in trance Tartarus and its Furies, just as in a vision of Olympus he would have seen Jupiter holding the thunderbolts in his hand.

¹⁶ Vide “*The Mediums’ Book*,” No. 113. – Tr.

¹⁷ Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*,” Nos. 443, 444.

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CHAPTER V

PURGATORY

1. The Gospels make no mention of Purgatory, which was not admitted by the Church until the year 593 of our era. The idea of Purgatory is certainly more rational and more in conformity with the justice of God, since it established a penal code of less severity, and provides for the redemption of the minor sorts of wrongdoing.

The idea of Purgatory is, therefore, based on the principle of equity; it is in the sphere of spirit-life, what temporary imprisonment is, in the earthly life, in comparison with perpetual imprisonment. What would be thought of the justice of a code that should punish the greatest crimes and the slightest transgressions, indiscriminately, with the penalty of death? Unless there is a Purgatory, there can be only two alternatives for all souls; supreme happiness, or eternal torment. What, according to this hypothesis, becomes of the souls who have only been guilty of minor transgressions? They must either share the happiness of the elect without having attained perfection, or they must suffer the same punishment as the very greatest criminals without having done anything very bad, which would be neither just nor reasonable.

2. But the notion of Purgatory was necessarily incomplete when it gained importance, for men at that time had no other idea of Hell than that of fire and they therefore naturally conceived of Purgatory as a lesser and shorter Hell; they supposed that souls were burned there, but with a burning less intense. And as the idea of progress is irreconcilable with the dogma of eternal punishment, they held that souls are delivered from Purgatory not as a consequence of their own moral improvement, but as an effect of the prayers that are said or paid for, by their friends on Earth for their deliverance.

The primary idea of Purgatory was true and good; but the same cannot be said of the consequences deduced from it, and the abuses of which it has thus become the source. Through the custom of paying for prayers on behalf of the souls in Purgatory, this doctrine has become a mine even more productive to those who work it than that of Hell.¹⁸

3. The site of Purgatory has never been determined, nor has the nature of the punishment endured therein ever been clearly defined. It was reserved for the new revelation to supply this lack by explaining the causes of the miseries of human life, the justice and aim of which can only be shown by the light that is thrown on the subject by the plurality of our existences.

Those miseries are necessarily a consequence of the imperfections of the soul; for, if the soul were perfect it would not do wrong, and would not have to undergo the sufferings which are the consequence of wrongdoing. He, who, for instance, should be sober and moderate in all things, would not fall a prey to the maladies that are engendered by excess. He who is unhappy is so, usually, through his own fault; but his imperfection is evidently a quality that he brought with him at birth, and which he must therefore have possessed before he came into the earthly life; he has, consequently, to expiate not only the faults he commits in his present life, but also the faults of his anterior lives for which he has not yet made reparation; he endures, in a life of troubles and trials, the wrongs he has caused others to endure in some previous existence. The vicissitudes that he undergoes are for him, both a temporary punishment and a warning against the imperfections of which he must cure himself, if he would avoid having to undergo similar vicissitudes in the future and advance on the road to perfection. The troubles of human life are so many lessons for the soul; lessons often hard to bear but that are all the more profitable for its future, in proportion to the depth of the impression left by them:

¹⁸ The doctrine of Purgatory has also given rise to the scandalous sale of indulgences, which pretend to enable people to purchase, with money, their entrance into Heaven. This gross abuse was the determining cause of the Reformation, and led to the rejection of the idea of Purgatory by Luther.

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they give rise to incessant struggles that develop its moral and intellectual faculties and strengthen it in the pursuit of goodness, and from which it always emerges victorious if it has had the courage to persevere in its efforts to the end. It reaps the reward of its victory in the spirit-life, into which it enters radiant and triumphant, like the soldier who returns from the battlefield to receive the conqueror's palm.

4. Each successive existence affords the soul an opportunity of advancing a step on the road of progress; the length of the step thus accomplished depends on its own will, for it may make a considerable advance or it may remain stationary. In the latter case, its sufferings will have been sterile; and, as each soul must pay its debt sooner or later, it will have to begin a new existence under conditions still more painful, because, to the stain of its previous lives, which it has failed to efface, it has added a new stain.

It is, therefore, by means of its successive incarnations that the soul gradually works itself clear of its imperfections, that it *purges* itself from them, so to say, until it is sufficiently purified to have acquired the right to quit the world of expiation and to incarnate itself in worlds of a happier nature, which it will subsequently quit, in their turn, to enter the regions of supreme happiness.

Purgatory, when thus explained, is no longer a vague and uncertain hypothesis; it is a physical reality which we see and touch, and to which we are, even now, subjected; for Purgatory is nothing else than the worlds of expiation and the Earth, as yet, is one of those worlds; worlds in which men expiate their past and their present, for the advancement of their future happiness. But, contrary to the idea usually entertained in regard to Purgatory, each man can abridge or prolong his stay in it, according to the degree of progress and purification to which he has attained as the result of his efforts at self-improvement; and he comes out of it, not because he has finished his time or through the merits of somebody else, but as the reward of his own individual merits, in virtue of the principle set forth in the declaration of Christ: — "*To each, according to his works;*" a declaration which sums up the entire code of the Divine justice.

5. He who suffers in the present life should therefore say to himself that he suffers because he failed to purify himself thoroughly in his preceding existence, and that, if he fails to accomplish his purification in his present life, he will suffer again in his next existence. And this is both just and reasonable. Suffering being inherent in imperfection, we suffer as long as we remain imperfect; just as we suffer from disease until we are cured of it. Thus, so long as a man remains proud, so long will he suffer from the consequences of his pride; so long as he remains selfish, so long will he suffer from the consequences of his selfishness.

6. The guilty spirit suffers, first, in the spirit-life, in proportion to the degree of his imperfections; and, next, in the return to terrestrial life which is granted to him as a means of repairing his past wrongdoing; and it is to this end that he finds himself thrown into the society of those whom he has wronged, or placed in the midst of surroundings similar to those in which he did the wrongdoing that he has to expiate, or in a situation which is its opposite: as, for example, in a state of poverty, if he has made a bad use of riches, or in a humble position, if he has been proud.

As previously remarked, the spirit's expiation of wrongdoing is effected both in the spirit-world and also upon the Earth; the expiation of the earthly life is only the *continuation* and *complement* of the expiation which had been previously begun by him in the spirit-world, and is imposed on him in order to help forward his improvement, by giving him the opportunity of *putting into practice* the lessons he has learned; it is for him to profit by the opportunity thus afforded him. Is it not better for him to come back to Earth, with the possibility of eventually winning the Heaven, than to be condemned to everlasting misery, on quitting the earthly life? The new opportunity thus given him of working out his own purification, and consequent happiness, is a proof of the wisdom, the goodness, and the justice of God, *who wills that each human being should owe everything to his own efforts, and should be the artificer of his future*; if he be unhappy, for a longer or shorter period, he has only

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himself to blame for it, and, whatever may be the intensity or duration of the suffering he may have brought upon himself, the door of repentance, amendment, and rehabilitation is always open for him.

7. On considering how great is the suffering of certain guilty spirits in the invisible world, how terrible is the situation of some of them, to what harrowing anxieties they are a prey, and how much their sufferings are intensified by their inability to foresee the end of them, we might well apply the term *Hell* to express the abyss of suffering and horror in which they find themselves, were it not that this word has been adopted as implying the idea of an eternal and physical punishment. Thanks to the light that has been thrown on this subject by the higher spirits, and to the examples that they placed before us by the ostensible communication now being generalized between incarnate and discarnate souls, we know that *the duration of expiation is subordinate to the amendment of the wrongdoer*.

8. Spiritism, therefore, does not deny the doctrine of the future punishment of the guilty; on the contrary, it asserts, explains, and justifies that doctrine. What Spiritism denies and destroys is the idea of a localized, physical Hell, with its fires and pitchforks, of unpardonable sins and eternal punishment. It does not deny the reality of Purgatory, *for it proves that the world in which we now are is a Purgatory*, that is to say, a place of punishment and discipline; and, by the explanation it thus furnishes of the sorrows and trials of the earthly life, it defines and gives precision to the vague idea that has hitherto obtained in regard to Purgatory, and, by so doing, renders it credible and acceptable to those by whom it was formerly rejected.

Does Spiritism reject the idea of praying for the dead? It does just the contrary, since the suffering spirits earnestly implore of us to pray for them; it shows us that to do so is one of the duties imposed on us by charity, and it also shows us the effectiveness of prayer as a means of *bringing them back to goodness*, and, thus, of shortening their sufferings.¹⁹ Addressing its doctrines to the intelligence, Spiritism gives religious belief to the unbelieving; it *proves* the value of prayer to those who formerly mocked at it. But Spiritism also shows that the effectiveness of prayer is in the *thought* it embodies and not in the *words* in which it is clothed, that the most efficacious prayers are those of the heart and not of the lips, those which a man offers of his own motion, and not those which he causes to be said by others for money.

9. Whether the chastisement of the guilty takes place in spirit-life or upon the Earth, and whatever its duration, it has always a term, more or less near, more or less distant. There are, therefore, for a spirit, only two alternatives, viz., *temporary punishment, proportioned to the degree of culpability*, and *reward, proportioned to merit*. Spiritism rejects the third alternative, viz., that of eternal damnation. It regards hell as a symbol of the severest forms of suffering endured by certain spirits, and of which the termination is unforeseen by them; but it regards Purgatory as a reality.

The word *Purgatory* suggests the idea of a circumscribed locality, and it is therefore more appropriately applied to Earth, considered as a place of expiation, than to the infinity of space in which suffering spirits undergo the expiations of the discarnate state; moreover, the earthly life is, by its very nature, a veritable expiation.

When men shall have grown better, they will furnish only good spirits to the invisible world; and these spirits, on incarnating themselves on Earth, will furnish only improved elements to the human race. Earth will then cease to be a world of expiation, and its human inhabitants will no longer have to endure the miseries that are the consequence of their present imperfection. This transformation is being effected at the present day; its accomplishment will raise the Earth to a higher rank in the hierarchy of worlds.²⁰

10. Why did Christ not speak of Purgatory? Because, the idea of Purgatory had not then been conceived by the human mind, and there was, consequently, no word by which to express it. He employed the word *hell*, the only one then in use, as a generic term, to designate the entire subject of

¹⁹ Vide "The Gospel According to Spiritism," chap. XXVII, *Action of Prayer*.

²⁰ Vide "The Gospel According to Spiritism," chap. III.

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future punishment in general, without reference to details. If, in contradistinction to the word *hell* he had employed another word equivalent to *purgatory*, he would have been unable to define its precise meaning without opening up a question that was reserved for the future; and he would also have appeared to declare the existence of *two* regions especially devoted to punishment. The word *hell*, in its general acceptation, suggests the idea of *punishment*, necessarily implied the idea of purgatory, which is only one of the modes of penalty. The future, being destined to enlighten mankind in regard to the nature of future punishment, was also destined, in so doing, to reduce the idea of hell to its true proportions.

The fact that the Church, after the lapse of six centuries, considered it necessary to supplement the teaching of Jesus by asserting the existence of Purgatory is an admission, on the part of theologians, that he did not reveal everything during his sojourn upon the Earth. Why, then, should not his teachings be progressively supplemented in regard to other points?

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CHAPTER VI

DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

Origin of the doctrine of eternal punishment – Arguments in support of eternal punishment – Physical impossibility of eternal punishment – The doctrine of eternal punishment has become obsolete – Declarations of Ezekiel against eternal punishment and original sin

ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

1. The belief in eternal punishment is losing ground so rapidly, from day to day, that the gift of prophecy is not needed to enable us to foresee its extinction at no distant time. It has been combated by arguments so powerful and so unanswerable that it seems almost superfluous to trouble ourselves with disproving a fallacy that is dying out of itself. Nevertheless, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that this doctrine, declining though it be, is still the rallying-point of the adversaries of progress, the article of their creed which they defend most obstinately, precisely because they feel it to be its most vulnerable side, and because they perceive how dangerous a breach its fall will make in the theological edifice. Regarded from this point of view, the doctrine in question may still be held to merit serious examination.

2. The doctrine of eternal punishment, like that of a physical Hell, was useful while the intellectual and moral backwardness of mankind required that they should be held in check by the fear of incurring the doom thus held up before their imagination. While they remain at too low a point of advancement to be efficaciously acted upon by the prospect of merely moral suffering, it is evident that they would have been as little restrained by the idea of any merely temporary punishment; and it is equally evident that they would have been incapable of comprehending the justice of graduated and proportionate penalties, because they could not have appreciated the various shades of right or wrong action, or the relative importance of either extenuating or aggravating circumstances.

3. The nearer men are to the primitive state, the more closely they are allied to materiality; for the moral sense is precisely the faculty of the human mind, which is the last developed. For this reason, they could only form to themselves a very imperfect idea of God and of His attributes, and an equally vague conception of the future life. They molded their idea of the Deity upon themselves. For them, God was an absolute sovereign, all the more formidable because invisible, like a despotic monarch who, hidden within his palace, never allows himself to be seen by his subjects. Having no conception of moral force, they could only conceive of His power as being of a physical nature; they imagined Him wielding the thunderbolt, moving in the midst of lightning and tempests, and scattering ruin and desolation around Him after the fashion of earthly conquerors. A God of love and of mercy would not have seemed to them to be a God, but a feeble being unable to secure obedience. On the contrary, implacable vengeance, chastisements the most terrific and unending were quite in harmony with the idea they had thus formed to themselves of the Divinity, and offered nothing repugnant to their minds. Being, themselves, implacable in their resentments, cruel to their enemies, pitiless for the vanquished, it appeared to them perfectly natural that God, whose power was superior to their own, should be still more implacable, cruel and pitiless than themselves.

For the influencing of such men, a religious belief in harmony with their rude and violent nature was necessary. A religion of spirituality, of love and of charity, would have been impossible with the brutality of their usages and passions. The Draconian legislation of Moses, which represented the

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Divine Being as a jealous and revengeful God, scarcely sufficed to keep within bounds of stiff-necked people committed to his charge; the gentle doctrine of Jesus would have awakened no echo in their hearts and would have been powerless to influence their action.

4. In proportion as the spiritual sense of mankind has become developed, the veil of materiality has become less opaque, and men have become better fitted to understand spiritual things; but this change has only taken place very gradually. At the time when Jesus came among them, it was possible for him to proclaim a merciful God, to speak of his “kingdom” as not being “of this world,” to say to men, “Love one another,” and “Return good for evil;” whereas, under the Mosaic Law, God was represented as sanctioning the principle of revenge summed up in the dictum, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”

What, then, were the souls who were living upon the Earth at the time of Jesus? Were they souls who had been newly created and were then incarnated for the first time? If so, God must have created in the time of Jesus, souls of better quality than those that He created in the time of Moses. But, if that were the case, what has become of those earlier-created souls? Have they been condemned to languish forever in the brutishness of the primitive era? Simple common sense suffices to show us that such a supposition is untenable. No; the souls incarnated upon the Earth, in the time of Jesus, were *the same souls* who, after having lived here under the empire of the Law of Moses, had gradually acquired, in successive existences posterior to that period, a degree of development sufficient to enable them to understand a teaching of a higher nature, and who, at the present day, are sufficiently advanced to be able to receive the still higher teaching now being given by Christ’s command, in fulfillment of his promise.²¹

5. At the time of Christ’s appearance, it was impossible for him to reveal to men all the truth in regard to their future. He says, expressly, “I have many things to tell you, but you could not understand them; and I am therefore compelled to speak to you in parables.” In regard to all points of morality, that is to say, all the duties of each man to his fellows, his teaching was explicit, because, as those duties refer to the relations of daily life, he knew that men would be able to understand him; in regard to all other matters, he confined himself to sowing, under the form of allegory, the germs of the truths that were destined to be developed at a later period.

The nature of future rewards and punishments was one of those points which were thus left by him in abeyance. He could not inculcate, especially in regard to future punishment, ideas so diametrically opposed to those held by men of his time. He came to trace out new duties for the human race, to inculcate charity and the love of the neighbor in place of the spirit of hatred and of vengeance, to substitute abnegation for selfishness, and such a change was, in itself, immense; he could not have gone farther without weakening the dread of the punishment in store for wrongdoing, because it would have weakened the sanction of duty in the minds of his hearers. He promised the Kingdom of Heaven to the righteous; that kingdom was, consequently, closed to the wicked. Whither, then, did the wicked go? It was necessary to suggest an antithesis to the idea of “Heaven” of a nature capable of impressing a salutary terror on minds still too much under the influence of materiality to be able to assimilate the

²¹ The population of the Earth consists not merely of souls who have been successively incarnated in it since the earliest times, but also of souls from other worlds, to whom it offers the conditions suited to their needs. Planets are progressive, as well as the beings by which they are inhabited; but their progress is slower than that of human beings, and the most advanced spirits of a planet leave it, in course of time, and incarnate themselves in some planet of greater advancement. On the other hand, when a planet passes from a lower to a higher degree of the hierarchy of worlds, the obstinately evil among its human population are “cast out” from it and sent down into the “outer darkness” of a world of lower degree, where they continue the work of their reformation (*re-formation*) amidst the hard and painful conditions of existence alluded to by Christ as “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

All the worlds of the universe are destined, like all other material bodies, to come to an end. When a material world has finished its career, its component elements are disaggregated and disseminated in space; and such of its inhabitants as still require the discipline of planetary life are reincarnated in other planets. From these sources (and from another source, not treated by the author), the population of a planet, during the ascending phase of its career, is constantly increased by the influx of souls from other worlds, and all the more rapidly as it’s physical and moral state becomes ameliorated. Vide THE SPIRITS’ BOOK, *Book Second*, chap. IV; THE MEDIUMS’ BOOK, chap. XXXI; THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM, chap. III; GENESIS, chap. XVIII – TR.

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idea of spirit-life; for it should not be forgotten that Jesus addressed his teachings to the multitude, to the least enlightened portion of the society of his day, and that, in order to act upon the minds of those around him, it was necessary to present to them images that should be *palpable* and not subtle. He therefore abstained from going into details that could not have been appreciated in his day; he contented himself with holding up the opposite prospects of reward and of punishment; and this was all that he could usefully do at that period.

6. While Jesus threatened the wicked with “everlasting fire,”²² he also threatened them with being thrown into “*Gehenna*,” but what was “*Gehenna*?” A place in the outskirts of Jerusalem, into which all the filth and rubbish of the city was habitually thrown. If we take the statement of “everlasting fire” as being a literal truth, why should we not also take the statement about being thrown “into *Gehenna*” as equally literal? No one has ever supposed the latter statement to be anything else than one of the energetic figures employed by Jesus to strike the imagination of the populace; why should we give a different interpretation to the “fire” with which he threatens the guilty? If he had intended to represent their subjection to that “fire” as eternal, he would have been in contradiction with himself in exalting the goodness and the mercy of God; for mercy and inexorability are contraries that mutually annul each other. The whole teaching of Jesus is a proclamation of the goodness and mercy of the Creator; and it is therefore evident that it is only through an entire misinterpretation of his utterances that the latter can be held to sanction the dogma of eternal punishment.

In *The Lord's Prayer*, he tells us to say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;” but, if the trespasser against the Divine law had no forgiveness to hope for, it would be useless for him to ask for it. But is the forgiveness thus alluded to by Jesus as a certainty, unconditional? Is it an act of grace on the part of God, a pure and simple remission of the penalty incurred by the transgressor? No; for the obtaining of this forgiveness by us is made conditional on our having forgiven; in other words, if we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven. Since God makes our forgiveness of trespasses against ourselves the absolute condition of His forgiveness of our trespasses against Himself, He could not demand of weak man to do that which He, with His almighty power, refused to do; and the teaching of *The Lord's Prayer* is therefore a standing protest against the doctrine which attributes eternal and implacable vengeance to God.

7. For men who had but a confused notion of the spiritual nature of the soul, there was nothing absurd in the idea of a region of physical fire, especially as there was a common belief in a Pagan Hell, universally divulged; nor was there, in the idea of punishment prolonged throughout eternity, anything calculated to shock the feelings of those who had been subjected, for centuries, to the penal code of stern and terrible Jehovah. As employed by Jesus, the threat of “everlasting fire” could only be metaphorical. What did it matter that this metaphor would be understood literally, for a time if it was useful as a curb? He foresaw that time and progress would bring men on towards a comprehension of the true meaning of this allegory, and according to his prediction, “*The Spirit of Truth*” should come to enlighten mankind respecting “all things.”

The essential characteristic of irrevocable condemnation is its implication of *the inefficacy of repentance*; but Jesus never said that repentance could fail to find favor in the sight of God. On the contrary, he always represents God as clement, merciful, and ready to welcome back the returning prodigal to the paternal home. He never shows Him as inflexible excepting to the unrepentant sinner; but even while insisting on the certainty of the punishment that awaits the guilty, he holds out the prospect of forgiveness as soon as the wrongdoer shall have returned to the path of duty. Such, assuredly, is not the portrait of a pitiless God; and it should never be forgotten that Jesus never pronounced an irremissible sentence against anyone, not even against the most wicked.

8. All the primitive religions, in accordance with the character of the peoples among whom they took their rise, have made to themselves warrior-gods whom they supposed to fight for them at the

²² Vide “*The Spirits' Book*,” No. 1003 and on; “*The Gospel According to Spiritism*,” chap. X, XV - Tr.

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head of their armies. The Jehovah of the Hebrews furnished his “chosen people,” on innumerable occasions, with the means of exterminating their enemies; he rewarded them by giving them victories and punished them by allowing them to undergo defeat. Conformably with their idea of God, the primitive nations imagined that He was to be honored and appeased by the blood of animals or of men; hence the sanguinary sacrifices that have played so prominent a part in so many of the religions of antiquity. The Jews had abolished human sacrifices; the Christians, notwithstanding the teachings of Christ, believed, for many centuries, that they honored the Creator by giving up thousands, of those whom they styled heretics to tortures and to the stake, thus continuing, under another form, the traditions of human sacrifices, for such were really the atrocities in question, since, according to the received formula, they were perpetrated “*for the greater glory of God,*” and with an accompaniment of solemn religious ceremonial. Even at the present day, nations that call themselves “Christian” invoke “*the God of Armies*” before the battles and glorify him after their victories; and they do this even when the purpose of their fighting is as unjust and as antichristian as possible.

9. How slow is man in getting rid of his prejudices, of his habits, of his early ideas! We are separated from Moses by forty centuries, and yet our Christian generation still retains traces of the usages of his barbarian time, consecrated, or, at least, approved, by the religions of our day! To put an end to the use of the stake, and to give currency to a more just idea of true greatness of God, has required all the force of the opinion of the non-orthodox of those who are considered as heretics by the Church. But although the stake has been abolished, social and moral persecutions are still in full vigor, so deeply rooted in the human mind is the idea of a cruel God. Filled with the notions that have been instilled onto them from their infancy, men naturally see nothing strange in the statement that God, who is represented to them as being honored by barbarous deeds, should condemn men to eternal tortures, and behold, without pity, the sufferings of the damned.

Yes, it is the philosophers, those who are qualified as “impious” by the Church, who have been scandalized at seeing the name of God profaned by being associated with deeds unworthy of His goodness; it is they who have presented to men a nobler idea of the greatness of the Divine Being, by stripping away from that idea the passions and pettiness attributed to Him by the unenlightened beliefs of the primitive ages. The religious sentiment has thereby gained in dignity what it has lost in external show; for, while there are fewer devotees of ecclesiastical formalities, there are a greater number of men who are sincerely religious in heart and feeling.

But, besides the latter, how many are there who, going no deeper than the surface, have been led to negation of the idea of Providential action! Through its failure to harmonize its doctrines with the progress of the human mind, the Church has driven some to Deism, others, to absolute unbelief, others, again, to Pantheism; in other words, it had driven man to make a god of himself, for lack of any higher ideal.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

10. To return to the dogma of eternal punishment, the principal argument invoked in its favor is the following:

It is admitted, among mankind, that the heinousness of an offence is proportioned to the quality of the offended party. An offence committed against a sovereign, being considered as more heinous than it would be if committed against a private person, is therefore punished more severely. God is greater than any earthly sovereign; since He is infinite, an offence against Him is infinite also, and must consequently incur an infinite (that is to say, an *eternal*) punishment.

Refutation. The refutation of any argument is a reasoning that must have a definite starting-point, a basis on which it rests, in a word, a clear and stable premise. We take, as our premise the

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necessary attributes of God, that is to say, the attributes without which He could not be God.²³

God is unique, eternal, immutable, immaterial, all-powerful, sovereignly just and good, infinite in all His perfections.

It is impossible to conceive of God otherwise than as possessing the infinity of His perfections; were He otherwise, would not be God, for there might be some other Being possessing the quality, which He lacked. In order for God to be above all other beings, He must necessarily be such that no other being can surpass or even equal Him in any respect. Consequently God must be infinite in all His attributes.

The attributes of God, being infinite, are not susceptible of increase or of diminution; otherwise, they would not be infinite, and God would not be perfect. If the smallest particle were taken from any of His attributes, He would no longer be God, for there might be some other being more perfect than He.

The infinity of a quality excludes the possibility of the existence of any quality contrary which would be capable of annulling or of lessening it. A being that is *infinitely good* cannot possess the smallest particle of wickedness, any more than a being that was *infinitely bad* could possess the smallest particle of goodness; just as no object could be *absolutely black* if it had the slightest tint of white, or *absolutely white*, if it had the smallest speck of black.

This basis and starting point being laid down, we oppose, to the proposition brought forward above, the following arguments:

11. It is only an infinite being that can do anything infinite. Man, being limited in his virtues, in his knowledge, in his power, in his aptitudes, in his terrestrial existence, can produce only that which is limited.

If man could be infinite in what he does amiss, he could also be infinite in what he does aright, and, in that case, he would be equal to God. But, if man were infinite in what he does aright, he would do nothing wrong, for absolute goodness is the exclusion of all evil.

On the other hand, even if it were possible to admit that a temporary offence against the Divinity could be infinite, God, if He revenged Himself by the infliction of an *infinite* punishment, would be *infinitely vindictive*; if He were infinitely vindictive, He could not be infinitely good and merciful, for the former attribute is the negation of the others. If He were not infinitely good, He is not perfect; and, if He were not perfect, He is not God.

If God were inexorable towards the repentant sinner, He is not merciful; if He were not merciful, He is not infinitely good.

Why should God impose on man the law of forgiveness, if He, Himself, do not forgive? If such were the case, it would follow that the man who forgives his enemies and returns good for evil is better than God, who remains deaf to the repentance of the weak creature that has sinned against Him, and who refuses to grant to that creature, *throughout eternity*, the slightest mitigation of the torments which his weakness and his inexperience have brought upon him!

God, who is everywhere and sees everything, must see the tortures of the damned. If He remained insensitive to their groans throughout eternity, He would be eternally devoid of pity; if He were devoid of pity, He would not be infinitely good.

12. To this argument it is replied that the sinner who repents before dying experiences the pity of God, and that, consequently, the very greatest sinner may find favor in His sight.

This is admitted on all hands, and it is but reasonable to assume that God forgives only those who repent and that He remains inflexible towards the unrepentant; but, if He is full of pity for the soul who repents before quitting his fleshly body, why should He cease to be so for him who repents after death? Why should repentance be efficacious only during an earthly lifetime, which is but an instant, and inefficacious throughout eternity, which has no end? If the goodness and mercy of God are

²³ Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," chap. I.

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circumscribed *within a fixed time*, they are not infinite, and, if such were the case, God is not infinitely good.

13. God is supremely just. The most perfect justice is neither that which is utterly inexorable, nor that which leaves wrongdoing unpunished; it is that which keeps the most exact account of good and evil, which rewards the one and punishes the other with the most perfect equity, and which never makes the slightest mistake.

If, for a temporary fault – which is, *always*, a result of the imperfection of human nature, and, *often*, of the surroundings in which the wrongdoer has been placed – the soul were to be punished eternally, without hope of forgiveness or of any diminution of suffering, there would be no proportion between the fault and its punishment, and, consequently, no justice in the chastisements of the future.

If the evildoer retraces his steps, repents, and demands of God to be allowed to make reparation for his evil deeds, his change of mind constitutes a return to virtue, to rectitude of feeling. But if the punishment of the other life were irrevocable, such a return to virtuous sentiments would remain sterile; and as, in that case, God would take no account of his desire for amendment, He would not be just. Among men, the convict who repents and amends obtains a commutation of his punishment, or, sometimes, even a full pardon; so that there would be more equity in human jurisprudence than in the penal code of the Divinity!

If the sentence passed on the sinner were irrevocable, repentance would be useless, and the sinner, being shut out forever from virtue, would be forcibly doomed to remain in evil; so that God would not only condemn the sinner to suffer forever, but would also compel him to remain forever in his wickedness. But, in that case, God would be neither just nor good; in other words, He would not be God.

14. Being infinite in all things, God must know all things, past, present, and future; and He must therefore know, at the very moment when He creates a soul, whether or not that soul will go widely enough astray to incur eternal damnation. If He does not know, His knowledge is not infinite, in which case He is not God; if He knows, and voluntarily creates a being that He foresees to be doomed, from its beginning, to the endurance of eternal misery, He is not good.

If God can be touched by the repentance of the soul that has incurred the penalty of its wrongdoing, and can extend to him His pity and *take him out of Hell*, there is no such thing as eternal damnation, and the doctrine which inculcates that idea must be admitted to be of human invention.

15. The doctrine of eternal damnation, therefore, leads inevitably to the negation or the lessening of some of the attributes of God; it is irreconcilable with the infinity and perfection of those attributes, and we are, consequently, forced to the following conclusion:

If God were perfect, there can be no such thing as eternal punishment; if eternal punishment exist, God is not perfect.

16. The advocates of eternal punishment bring forward the following argument:

“The rewards accorded to the good, being eternal, must have their counterpart in an eternity of punishment. Justice demands that punishment should be proportioned to reward.”

Refutation. — Does God create a soul with a view to rendering it happy or to rendering it unhappy? Evidently, the happiness of the creature must be the aim of its creation, as, were it otherwise, God would not be good. The soul attains to happiness as the consequence of its own worthiness; that worthiness once acquired, its fruition can never be lost by the soul, for such a loss would imply degeneracy on its part, and the soul that has become intrinsically good, being incapable of evil, cannot degenerate. The eternity of happiness of the purified soul is therefore implied in its immortality.

But, before attaining to perfection, the soul has to wage a long struggle, to fight many a battle with its evil passions. God having created the soul, not perfect – *but susceptible of becoming such*, in order that it may possess the merits of its labors – the soul may err. Its lapses from the right road are the consequence of its natural weakness. If, for a single error, the soul is to be punished eternally, it

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might fairly be asked why God did not create it strong to begin with? The punishment that the soul brings upon itself, by its wrongdoing, gives it notice that it has done wrong, and should have for effect to bring it back to the path of duty. If its punishment were irremissible, any desire on its part to do better would be superfluous; and, in that case, the Providential aim of creation would be unattainable, since, although there would be some beings predestined to happiness, there would be other beings predestined to misery. But if we admit that a guilty soul can repent, we must also admit that it can become good; if it can become good, it may aspire to happiness: would God be just if He denied to it the means of rehabilitation?

Good being the final aim of creation, happiness, which is the result and reward of goodness, must, in the nature of things, be eternal; but punishment, which is only a means for leading the soul to goodness and to happiness, must be only temporary. The most elementary notion of justice, even among men, suffices to show us that it would be unjust to inflict perpetual punishment on one who had the desire and the determination to amend.

17. Another argument in favor of eternal punishment is the following:

“The fear of eternal punishment is a curb; if that fear were done away with, man would give free course to all his evil tendencies.”

Refutation — This reasoning would be justified if the non-eternal sins implied the elimination of any penal sanction. If the happy or unhappy situation in a future life were a rigorous consequence of Divine Justice, and the future situation of a good man and a perverse one were equal, there would be no justice even though it was not eternal; the punishment would, nonetheless, be a torment. Moreover, the prospect of future punishment and this *reality will necessarily be believed in, and consequently dreaded, in proportion to the reasonableness of the aspect under which it is presented. The threat of a penalty, in the reality of which men do not believe, has no restraining effect on their action; and the threat of eternal punishment is of this nature.*

The doctrine of eternal punishment, as previously remarked, was natural and useful in the past; at the present day, it is not only inefficacious to restrain men from wrongdoing, but it causes them to disbelieve. Before holding up that doctrine before the eyes of men as a *necessity*, its advocates should demonstrate its *reality*, and they should also, as the most conclusive argument in its favor, show that it exercises a moralizing effect on those who hold it and who endeavor to uphold it. If it is powerless to restrain from wrongdoing those who say that they believe in it, what action can it exert over those who do not believe in it?

PHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

18. We have hitherto combated the dogma of eternal punishment by argument only; we shall now show that it is in contradiction with positive facts that we have under our eyes, and that it is, consequently, impossible that it can be true.

According to the dogma we are considering, the fate of the soul is irrevocably fixed at death, so that death constitutes an absolute barrier to progress. The one question, therefore, which has to be decided, is this; – Is the soul progressive, or is it not progressive? On this question the whole subject must be rested; for, if the soul is progressive, eternal punishment is impossible.

And how can we doubt that the soul is progressive, when we behold the immense variety of moral and intellectual aptitudes existing among the peoples of the Earth, from the savages to the civilized degree, and when we reflect upon the differences presented by the same people in the successive periods of history? If we assume that the souls of a given people, at those successive periods, are not the same souls, we must also assume that God creates souls at every degree of advancement, according to some differences of times and places, thus favoring some, while

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condemning others to perpetual inferiority; but such an assumption is incompatible with the Divine justice, which must be the same for all the creatures of the universe.

19. It is incontestable that the soul, in the state of intellectual and moral backwardness that characterizes the peoples that have not emerged from barbarism, cannot possess the same aptitudes for enjoying the splendors of infinity as are possessed by the soul whose intellectual and moral faculties are more largely developed. Therefore, if the souls of barbarians do not progress, those souls can never, throughout eternity, and even though under the most favorable conditions, enjoy anything more than the low and negative happiness of the barbarian degree. The conclusion is consequently forced upon us (if we admit the justice of God), that the souls of the most advanced peoples are the very same souls that were formerly at the barbarian degree of backwardness, but that have since progressed; and we are thus brought face to face with the great question of *the plurality of existences*, as the only rational solution of the difficulty. We will, however, in this place, leave that solution out of sight, and restrict our inquiry to the evidences of its progressibility afforded by the career of the soul during the course of a single lifetime.

20. Let us suppose – what is so often seen – a youth of twenty, ignorant, vicious, denying alike the existence of God and of the soul, and giving himself up to wickedness of every kind, until he finds himself placed among new circumstances and influences that exercise a beneficial effect upon his mind. He, then, relinquishes his former habits, enters upon a course of useful study, gradually surmounts his evil tendencies, and becomes, at length, an enlightened, virtuous, and useful member of society. Is not the fact of such a reformation – and we witness such reformations everyday – a positive proof of the progressibility of the soul during an earthly lifetime? The reformed rake, whose case we are supposing, dies, at length, full of years and of honors, and no one has the slightest doubt of his salvation. But what would have been his fate of some accident had caused his death some forty or fifty years before? At that time he was, in all respects, just in the right condition for being damned, all possibility of progress would have been over for him. So that, in such a case, a man, who, according to the doctrine of eternal punishment, would have been lost forever if he had died when he was young – which might have happened as the result of some casualty – is saved, simply because his life has been prolonged. But, as his soul was able to progress during his earthly lifetime, why might it not have achieved an equal amount of progress in the same length of time after his death; if some cause, independent of his will, had prevented him from achieving that progress at a later period in his earthly life? Why, then, should God have refused to such a soul the means of progressing after death? Repentance, though tardy, would have been awakened in such a soul in course of time; but if, at the very instant of death, his soul had been met by an irrevocable condemnation, its repentance would have remained sterile throughout eternity, and its aptitude for progressing would have been neutralized forever.

21. The dogma of eternal punishment is therefore irreconcilable with the doctrine of the progressibility of the soul, to which progressibility it would constitute an insuperable obstacle. These two doctrines mutually annihilate each other; if either one of them be true, the other must necessarily be a fiction. Which of them is the true one? That progress is a law of nature, divine, imprescriptible, and not a mere theory, is evident; for progress is a fact, the reality of which is attested by experience; and since, on the one hand, progress exists, while, on the other hand, its existence is irreconcilable with the dogma of eternal punishment, we are compelled to admit that this dogma is false, and that eternal punishment has no existence. Moreover, the utter absurdity of such a dogma becomes at once apparent when we reflect that Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and half the saints of the ecclesiastical calendar, would never, if that dogma were true, have been admitted into “heaven,” if they had happened to die before the occurrence of the various incidents which led to their conversion!

To this last remark it will be replied by some that the conversion of those saintly personages was a result, not of any progress due to the spontaneous action of their soul, but of divine “grace,” accorded to them from on high, and by which their conscience was miraculously touched.

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But such a reply is a mere trifling with words. If they began by doing wrong, and, afterwards, took to doing right, their change of action shows that they had become better, in other words, that *they had progressed*. Why should such a favor have been granted to them and not granted to everyone else? Why should we attribute, to God, a favoritism incompatible with His justice, and with the equal love, which, being just, He necessarily bears to all His creatures?

Spiritism, in accordance with the express teachings of the Gospel, with reason, and with justice, shows us that each soul is the artisan of its fortunes, both during life and after death; that it owes its progress and happiness to its own efforts, and not to any favoritism; that God rewards its endeavors to advance in the path of progress, and punishes its negligence as long as it continues to be negligent.

THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IS A THING OF THE PAST

22. The belief in the physical nature and eternal duration of the future punishment of the wicked has maintained hold on the human mind, as a salutary restraint, during the ages in which men were still too backward to comprehend the force of moral considerations. It has been with the world, in regard to this belief, as with children, who are held in check, for a few years, by the chimerical terrors which are brought to bear on them; but there comes a time when the mind of the child has outgrown the empty tales that formerly frightened him, and when it would be simply absurd on the part of those about him to attempt any longer to influence him by any such means, and when, if his parents or guardians pretended that those tales were true and were to be accepted and respected as such, they would necessarily forfeit his confidence.

It is thus with the convictions of mankind at the present day. The human race is passing out of its childhood and shaking itself free of the leading strings of the past. Men are no longer either mere tools, yielding passively to the pressure of physical force, or credulous children, believing implicitly whatever is told them.

23. Belief, at the present day, must be based on reason; consequently, no doctrine that is contrary to reason can continue to maintain its hold on the human mind. The doctrine of eternal punishment may have been not only harmless, but also even useful, at a given period of human development; but it has become positively dangerous, now that the period of its usefulness has passed. When the human mind has acquired the power and habit of reasoning, the attempt to impose upon it, as the absolute truth, something that is contrary to reason, must necessarily lead to one of two alternatives; either the man whose mind is thus brought face to face with an absurdity wishes to believe, and seeks out for himself a more rational conception – in which case he breaks loose from his official teachers – or he throws the very idea of belief overboard, and becomes a skeptic or an atheist. For all who have calmly studied this aspect of the question, it is evident that, at the present day, the dogma of eternal punishment has made more materialists and atheists than the argument of all the so-called philosophers put together.

The course of human thought is always onward. Men can only be led by considerations in harmony with this progressive movement of human ideas; the attempt to arrest this movement or turn it back, or merely to fall into its rear, while the current continues to flow on, must necessarily be fatal to the influence of those who make the attempt. To follow, or not to follow, this onward movement of the human mind is a question of life or death, for creeds as for governments. Is this to be regretted or to be rejoiced in? Assuredly, it must appear regrettable to those who, living upon the past, see the past slipping from under them; but, for those whose eyes are turned towards the future, it is the law of progress, the law of God, against which all resistance is vain, for those who fight against the Divine Will won't succeed.

But why should any person be determined to uphold, by main force, a belief that is not only dying out from the convictions of mankind, but which, in point of fact, is far more injurious than

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useful to the cause of religion? Alas! It is sad to have to make such a confession, but the fact is that, in the desperate efforts now being made to keep up the doctrine we are considering, the question of religion is subordinated to the question of pecuniary gain. The belief in eternal punishment has been made a source of large revenue to those who have inculcated it, because there has been craftily interwoven with it the idea that men, through the giving of money, can procure for themselves admission into Heaven, and thus preserve themselves from Hell. The sums that this doctrine has brought, and still brings, defy all calculation; *it is a tax levied on the fear of eternity*. This tax being a voluntary one, its amount proportioned to the degree of belief accorded to the doctrine on which it is based; if that belief should cease to exist, the tax to which it gives rise would also cease to exist. The little child, who believes in the existence of the werewolf, willingly gives his cake to the bigger boy who promises to drive the dreaded visitant away; but when the child has ceased to believe in werewolves, he keeps the cake for himself.²⁴

24. As the new revelation, inculcating more rational ideas in regard to the future life shows that *each soul must work out its own salvation through its own efforts*, it naturally excites an opposition that is all the more bitter in proportion to the importance of the source of pecuniary gain which it destroys. The same angry opposition is always excited by every new discovery or invention that threatens to change the habits of mankind. All those who have been accustomed to gain their living by the old costly ways and appliances of the past, cry up the same, and decry those of their innovating rivals. Is it supposable, for instance, that the art of printing, notwithstanding the immense services it was evidently destined to render to the human race, could have been welcomed, at its commencement, by the enthusiastic acclamations of numerous body of copyists? Assuredly not; on the contrary, they would naturally receive the new invention with curses. All kinds of laborsaving machinery, railways, and the thousand other inventions that have superseded old ways and systems, have met with similar opposition.

By the skeptic, the doctrine of eternal punishment is regarded as an absurdity that it would be impossible to discuss without a smile; while, in the eyes of the philosophers, it constitutes, through the falsities it implies and the abuses to which it leads, a serious danger for society: the sincerely religious man desires, for the honor of religion and the well-being of society, to see those abuses got rid of through the sweeping away of the unfounded and irrational assumption that is their cause.²⁵

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL AGAINST THE DOCTRINES OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND ORIGINAL SIN

25. To those who bring forward, in support of the doctrine of eternal punishment, certain Bible-texts that may seem, at first sight, to favor that doctrine, we reply that the Bible contains other texts, of a contrary character, and that are more clearly and decidedly condemnatory of that doctrine. For example, the following passages from Ezekiel are an explicit denial, not only of eternal punishment, but also of the condemnation supposed to have been entailed, by the sin of the father of the human race, on his descendants:

1. The Lord spoke to me again, and said: — **2.** How is it that you have among you this parable, and that you have made of it a proverb in Israel, saying: — "The fathers have eaten unripe grapes, and

²⁴ The Author's strictures, though more immediately directed against the Roman Catholic Church, with its paid masses for procuring the release of souls from Purgatory, are equally applicable to the other so-called Christian churches, the basis of whose organization, pecuniary support, motive, and aim, is seen, on reflection, to be, mainly, *fear of eternal punishment and anxiety to escape it*. —TR.

²⁵ Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," nos. 974, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009.

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the children's teeth have thereby been set on edge?" – **3.** I swear by myself, said the Lord God, that this parable shall no longer pass among you as a proverb in Israel; — **4.** For all souls are mine; the soul of the son is mine as is the soul of the father; the soul that has sinned, that soul, itself, shall die.

5. If a man is righteous, if he acts according to equity and justice; – **7.** If he neither grieves nor opposes anyone; if he gives back to his debtor the pledge he had received from him; if he takes nothing from others by violence; if he gives of his bread to the hungry; if he covers with garments those who are naked; – **8.** If he does not lend on usury and receives no more than he gave; if he turns away his hand from iniquity, and if he renders a just verdict between two men who plead against one another; – **9.** If he walks in the path of my precepts and keeps my commandments, so that he acts according to the truth: he is righteous, and he shall surely live, said the Lord God. **10.** If this man has a son who is a robber, and who sheds blood, or who does any evil deeds, – **13.** This son shall surely die, because he has done that which is detestable, and his blood shall be on his own hand. – **14.** But if this wicked son has a son who, seeing the evil deeds that his father has done, is seized with fear and takes good care not to imitate his wrongdoing, – **17.** This son shall not die for the iniquity of his father, but shall surely live. – **18.** His father, who had oppressed others by his calumnies, and who had done evil deeds in the midst of his people, is put to death for his own iniquity.

19. If you say: "Why has not the son borne the iniquity of his father?" It is because the son has acted according to equity and justice; because he has kept all my precepts and has practiced them; for which reason he shall surely live.

20. The soul that has sinned, that soul, itself, shall die: *The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son;* the righteousness of the righteous man shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked man shall be upon him.

21. If the wicked man repents of all the sins he has committed; if he keeps all my precepts, and if he acts according to equity and justice, he shall surely live and shall not die. – **22.** *I will no longer remember the iniquity he had committed; he shall live in the deeds of righteousness that he has done.*

23. Do I desire the death of the wicked? Said the Lord God; and do I not, on the contrary, desire that he should be converted, and that he should turn from his evil path, and that he should live? – (Ezekiel, chap. XXXIII v. 11, and on)²⁶

²⁶ Translation of the Bible by Le Maitre de Sacy; the version always used by Allan Kardec, as by the generality of French Protestants. – TR.

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CHAPTER VII

THE SPIRITIST VIEW OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

The flesh is weak – Sources of the spiritist doctrine of future punishment – Penal code of the life to come

THE FLESH IS WEAK

Among the vicious tendencies of mankind, there are some that are evidently inherent in the soul, because they belong rather to the moral than to the physical nature; others – such as the predisposition to anger, laziness, sensuality, etc. – appear to be rather results of the human organization, and, for this reason, men are apt to regard them as something for which they are less responsible.

It is fully admitted, at the present day, by the philosophers of the spiritualist school,²⁷ that the cerebral organs, that correspond to the various mental aptitudes, owe their development to the activity of the soul, and that, consequently, this development is an *effect* and not a *cause*. For instance, a man is not a musician because he has the “bump” of music, but he has the “bump” of music simply because his spirit is already a musician. And so of all the other “bumps” and faculties.

If the activity of the human spirit reacts upon the brain with which he is associated during his earthly life, it must also react upon all the other parts of his organism. The spirit is thus the artisan of his physical body, which he fashions, so to say, for himself,²⁸ in order to fit it to his needs and to the manifestation of his tendencies. This fact being admitted, we see that the improved bodies of the more advanced races are not the product of distinct creations, but are a result of the more enlightened action of the spirits incarnated in them, who improve their tools and their methods of working in proportion as they develop their moral and intellectual faculties.

As a natural consequence of the principle alluded to, the moral qualities of each incarnated spirit must modify the qualities of his blood and of all his other secretions, causing them to be produced in more or less abundance, giving them more or less activity, etc. It is thus, for instance, that the sight of a tempting dish brings a flow of saliva to the mouth of the lover of good cheer. In this case, it is not the food that excites the organ of taste, for there is no contact between the food and the palate; the flow of saliva is therefore caused by the direct action of the spirit whose sensuality is thus roused, and who, by his thought, influences his palate, whereas the sight of the very same dainty produces, on some other organism, no effect whatever. It is for the same reason that a person of a sensitive nature is prompt to shed tears; it is not the abundance of lachrymal fluid that renders a person sensitive, but the sensitiveness of his spirit that causes the abundant secretion of tears. Under the action of sensibility, the organism, in the latter case, has molded itself upon the normal characteristic of the spirit, just as, in the former case, it has molded itself on the spirit’s love of eating.

By following this train of thought, we understand how it is that an irascible spirit naturally produces for himself a bilious temperament of body; whence it follows that a man is not passionate because he is bilious, but that he is bilious because he is passionate. It is the same with all the other instinctive tendencies; a weak and indolent spirit will leave his organism in a state of atony corresponding to his character, while an energetic and active spirit will give to his blood, his nerves,

²⁷ The term “spiritualist” is employed here, as it has been invariably employed by the thinkers and writers of every age, in its true, universally recognized sense as the *opposite of materialist*. – TR.

²⁸ With the aid of the elements and forces of the planet in which he is about to incarnate himself, according to the action of that branch of the Divine ordaining to which we give the name of *natural law*. – TR.

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etc., qualities in harmony with the energy and activity of his nature. The action of the spirit upon its physical envelope is so evident as to be incontestable, for we often see the most serious organic disorders produced as the effect of some violent moral upsetting. The common remark, "*The shock turned his blood,*" is by no means so void of truth, as is sometimes supposed; but what, in such a case, has "turned" the man's blood, if not the moral state of his spirit?

We must therefore admit that the temperament of each individual is determined, at least in part, by the nature of his spirit, which is thus seen to be a *cause* and not an *effect*. We say, *in part*, because there are cases in which the physical nature evidently exercises an influence on the moral being; as, for instance, when a morbid or abnormal state of the latter is determined by some external or accidental cause, independent of the spirit's will, such as the temperature of the air, climate, inherited tendencies to certain diseases, temporary illness, etc. In such cases, the moral state of a spirit may be affected by the pathologic conditions of his body, without his intrinsic nature being in any degree modified thereby.

To excuse ourselves by throwing the blame of our wrongdoing on the weakness of the flesh is, therefore, only an evasive attempt to escape the responsibility of our own misdeeds. *The flesh is only weak because the spirit is weak*; a proposition that places the question on its true ground, and leaves the spirit responsible for all its deeds during its earthly lifetime. The flesh, which has neither thought nor will, has no mastery over the spirit, which is the being that *thinks* and *wills*; it is the spirit that gives to the flesh the various qualities corresponding to its own instinctive tendencies, as the artist stamps the imprint of his genius on his work. The spirit, who has freed himself from the instincts of bestiality, fashions for himself a human body which opposes no tyrannous obstacles to the aspirations of his spiritual nature; a man thus incarnated, for instance, will *eat to live*, but will certainly not *live to eat*.

Each human being is thus seen to be fully responsible for all the actions of his life; but reason tells us that the consequences of this responsibility must necessarily be proportioned to the intellectual development of the spirit of each individual. The more enlightened is the spirit, the less excusable is he if he does amiss, because, with the development of the intellect and of the moral sense, the ideas of good and evil of right and wrong, also become developed in the mind of man.

The action of the incarnated spirit upon his fleshly envelope explains the powerlessness of medicine in certain maladies. The physical temperament being an *effect* and not a *cause*, it is evident that, in many cases, the efforts made to modify it will be paralyzed by the moral state of the patient, which interposes an unsuspected obstacle to medical treatment and paralyses the action of the remedies employed. It is, therefore, on the primary cause of a morbid physical state that we should act. For example; if we could give courage to a coward, we should witness the immediate disappearance of the physiological effects of fear; a consideration which shows us how necessary it is that those who devote themselves to the healing art should take account of the action of the spiritual element on the physical organization.²⁹

SOURCES OF THE SPIRITIST DOCTRINE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

The Spiritist Doctrine, in regard to the future punishment of wrongdoing, is no more founded on a pre-conceived theory than are the other elements of that doctrine. Spiritism³⁰ in all its proportions is based on observation, and it is this fact which constitutes its certainty and its irrefragability. No one had assumed, a priori, that the souls of men, after death, found themselves in such and such a situation; it is those souls themselves, who, having quitted the earthly life, are now entering into communication

²⁹ Vide "*Revue Spirite*" of March, 1869, p. 65.

³⁰ Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," Introduction, I.; "*The Mediums' Book*," p.448.

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with us, in order to initiate us into the mysteries of the life beyond the grave, to describe to us the happiness or unhappiness of their present state of existence, their impressions, and the transformation undergone by them at the death of their body; in short, to complete, in regard to this matter, the teachings of Christ.

The information thus arrived at has not been derived from the statements of a single spirit, who might have observed the things of the other life solely from his own point of view under one and the same aspect, or who might still have been under the sway of his earthly prejudices and prepossessions; neither is it derived from a revelation made to a single individual, who might have been deceived by appearances, nor from the visions of an ecstatic which are always more or less illusory, and are often only the mirage of an excited imagination.³¹ It is derived from the observation, and statements, of innumerable spirits, of every category, from the highest to the lowest,³² with the aid of innumerable intermediaries scattered over the entire globe. The new revelation, therefore, is not being made exclusively through anyone channel; every inquirer may see, and observe, for himself; and no one is obliged to base his belief on the statements of others.

PENAL CODE OF LIFE TO COME

The spiritist doctrine, in regard to the punishment that awaits the evildoer, in the life to come, is therefore no arbitrary or fanciful theory, but is a logical deduction from the observation of facts made known to us by the statements of innumerable spirits; its principle points may be summed up as follows:

1. Each discarnate spirit undergoes, in the spirit world, the consequences of the various imperfections of which he has failed to cure himself during his earthly life. His state in that world, whether happy or unhappy, is the direct consequence of, and inherent in, the degree of his advancement or of his imperfection.

2. Perfect happiness belongs, exclusively, to the state of perfection, that is to say, of the spirit's complete purification. Every imperfection is at once a source of suffering and the privation of an enjoyment; and every acquisition of knowledge or of goodness brings with it an increase of enjoyment and diminishes the sources of suffering.

3. *Every imperfection of the soul produces its own inevitable share of suffering; and every good quality produces, in virtue of the same law, its own natural, certain, share of happiness.* The amount of a spirit's suffering is thus exactly proportioned to the degree of his imperfection; and the amount of a spirit's happiness is exactly proportioned to the degree of his intellectual and moral advancement.

A spirit who has still, say, ten imperfections to get rid of, suffers proportionately more than one who has only three or four; when he has succeeded in ridding himself of a quarter, or half, of those imperfections, he suffers proportionately less, and, when he has rid himself of the whole of them, he has got rid of every source of suffering, and is perfectly happy. It is just as it is upon the Earth with our bodily ailments and imperfections; he who has a complication of diseases suffers more than he who has but one disease; and if a man were perfectly healthy, it is evident that he would suffer no physical pain whatever. In the same way, the spirit who has acquired ten good qualities has a proportionally greater amount of happiness than one who possesses fewer good qualities.

4. In virtue of the law of progress – each spirit having the power to acquire the good qualities which he lacks and to rid himself of his bad ones, according to his force of will and the amount of effort he makes for that purpose – the gate of hope and happiness is open to every creature. God

³¹ Vide chap. VI, No. 7, “*The Spirits’ Book*,” Nos. 443, 444; “*The Mediums’ Book*,” pp. 124, 125, 202.

³² That is to say, *within the limits of the attraction of the earth*; the advanced spirits of earlier creations being altogether unapproachable by our thought. – TR.

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repudiates none of His children; He receives them all into favor as they attain to the perfection of their being, thus leaving to each of them the merit of his deeds.

5. Suffering being indissolubly connected with imperfection, and enjoyment with excellence, the soul finds its own chastisement in itself, wherever it may be, and needs no circumscribed place as the scene of its suffering. “Hell” is, consequently, wherever there are souls that suffer, as “Heaven” is, wherever there are souls that are happy.

6. The good, or the evil, that we do is the result of the good or evil qualities possessed by our spirit. Not to do all the good which we have the power to do is evidently the result of imperfection on our part; and, consequently, as every imperfection is a source of suffering, a spirit suffers, not only for all the evil he has done, but also for the good which he might have done, but did not do, during his earthly life.

7. A spirit suffers through the evil that he has done, in order that, *his attention being concentrated on the consequences of that evil*, he may better understand its disastrous nature, and be led to amend himself.

8. The justice of God being infinite, as exact account is kept, for each soul, of the good and the evil done by it in the course of its earthly life. No evil deed, no evil thought, however slight, fails to produce its own appropriate punishment; but also, no good deed, however minute, no right feeling, however fugitive, no virtuous aspiration, however faint, is ever overlooked, or ever remains sterile, even in the case of spirits the most depraved; *for they are the commandment of its reformation and progress*.

9. Every fault committed, every evil deed accomplished, is a debt that must be paid; if it be not paid in the present earthly life it will be paid in the next one or in subsequent ones, because all the lives of a spirit form a consecutive series, a whole, all the phases of which are a part and parcel of each other. He who pays his debt in the present life will not have to pay it in any future one.

10. A spirit undergoes the penalty of his defects both in the spirit world and in the life of the flesh. All the tribulations, all the miseries, which we suffer in the earthly life are at once the consequences of our own defects and expiations of faults that have been committed by us, either in our present life or in some of our former existences.

By the nature of the sufferings and vicissitudes that we have to undergo in our present life, we can judge of the nature of the faults committed by us in a preceding life, and of the imperfections to which those faults were due.

11. The expiation of wrongdoing varies according to the nature and the gravity of the offences committed; consequently, the same offence may entail different kinds and degrees of expiation in different cases, according as it may have been attenuated, or aggravated, by the circumstances under which it was committed.

12. In regard to the nature and duration of future punishment, there is no absolute and uniform rule; the only general law is this, viz., that *every misdeed* shall receive its just and appropriate punishment, and that *every good deed* shall receive its just and appropriate reward, *exactly proportioned to the action of which it is the consequence*.

13. The duration of punishment depends entirely on the more or less rapid self-amendment of the spirit by whom it has been incurred. No spirit is ever condemned to any *fixed* term of punishment. The only conditions required by Providence, for the releasing of a guilty spirit from the sufferings of expiation, are his sincere return to a better mind, and his hearty determination to labor steadfastly for the acquisition of wisdom and goodness.

Each spirit is thus, and always, the sole arbiter of his own condition; he may prolong his sufferings by hardening himself in evil, he may lessen them, or may put an end to them by his efforts to advance in the path of rectitude.

The sentencing of spirits to any fixed term of punishment would be open to the double objection of prolonging, in some cases, the punishment of a spirit *after* he has entered on a course of

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amendment, and, in other cases, of relieving a spirit from punishment *before* he has entered on that course. God, being just, punishes evil *only so long as it continues to exist*; He ceases to punish *when the evil, that had necessitated punishment, has ceased to exist*.³³ In other words, *moral evil being, itself, the cause of a spirit's suffering*, that suffering necessarily lasts as long as the moral evil, which is its cause, continues to exist, but, as necessarily, diminishes its intensity as the spirit's moral state improves.

14. The duration of a spirit's punishment depending solely on his own delay in working out his own inner reform, it follows that, if a spirit persisted forever in remaining wicked, he would remain forever in a state of suffering, and that, consequently, in such a case, the spirit's punishment would be eternal.³⁴

15. One of the conditions inherent in a spirit's moral inferiority is *inability to foresee the end of his suffering*, and this inability leads him to believe that it will last forever. Accordingly, guilty spirits are always found to be possessed with the idea that the chastisement they are undergoing will be eternal.³⁵

16. Repentance is the first step towards improvement; but repentance, alone, is not sufficient to deliver the wrongdoer from the consequences of his wrongdoing; to affect this result, *expiation* and *reparation* are also necessary.

Repentance, expiation, and reparation, are the three conditions necessary for the effacing of a fault and the suppression of its consequences.

Repentance mitigates the sufferings of expiation, because it opens the door to hope and paves the way to rehabilitation; but it is only *reparation* that, by destroying the *cause* of our suffering, can annul the suffering which is its effect; *the granting of a free pardon to the wrong-doer would be merely the granting of a favor and not an annulling of the cause and consequences of his wrongdoing*.

17. Repentance may begin in the spirit-life or in the life of the flesh, and at any period; if a spirit's repentance is tardy, he suffers for a longer time.³⁶

Expiation consists in the sufferings, both physical and moral, that are the results of a spirit's wrong-doing – whether in the course of the same earthly life in which he has done wrong, or in the phase of spirit-life succeeding it, or in a new earthly life – until all traces of his wrong-doing have been effaced.

Reparation consists in doing good to those whom we have wronged. He who, through lack of power or of will, does not make reparation, in a given life, for the wrongs he has done in that life, will be brought again, in a new earthly life, into contact with the parties he has wronged in that former life, and under conditions which he will himself have chosen beforehand, and which will have been contrived in such a way as to give him the opportunity of proving his devotion to them, and of enabling him to do them as much good as he formerly did them harm.

There are faults of which a man may be guilty, but which do not cause any direct and personal injury to other people; in such cases, the reparation of a fault is accomplished in one or other of the following ways: – by doing, in a subsequent incarnation, what he ought to have done, but did not do, in a former one, whether by discharging duties which he neglected or did not see to be incumbent on him, or by fulfilling missions which he failed to fulfill in that former life, or by practicing the virtues

³³ Vide chap. VI, No. 25, the quotation from Ezekiel on this point.

³⁴ Vide "The Spirits' Book," No. 1006.

³⁵ The word *eternal* is synonymous with *perpetual*, and both words mean, not an *endless duration*, but merely *a duration of which the end is not foreseen*. We say "the region of eternal (or perpetual) snows," "the eternal (or perpetual) ice of the Poles;" we also say "The Perpetual Secretary of the French Academy," which does not mean that the scientist occupying that post will continue to occupy it *forever*, but merely that he has been appointed to it for an unlimited period. The words *eternal* and *perpetual* are therefore employed to express the idea of *indefinite, undetermined*. Thus explained, the future punishment of the wicked may be said to be "eternal" in as much as the punishment has no fixed and defined duration, so that it *appears* to be "eternal" to the spirit who is undergoing it, and who does not foresee any termination of his suffering. – Vide "The Spirits' Book," Nos. 973, 1009.

³⁶ Vide "The Spirits' Book," No. 990 and on. – TR.

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which are the opposites of the vice in which he then indulged; that is to say, by being humble if he has been haughty; gentle, if he has been harsh; kindly, if he had been unkind; hardworking, if he has been idle; helpful, if he has been useless; temperate, if he has been dissolute; setting a good example, if he has set a bad one; and so on. It is thus that a spirit progresses by turning to profitable account the experiences and the lessons of his past existences.³⁷

18. Spirits of slight advancement are excluded from the happier worlds whose harmony would be impaired by their presence; they therefore remain in worlds of correspondingly low degree – where they expiate their faults, and purify themselves from their imperfections – until they have acquired the moral qualities which enable them to incarnate themselves in worlds of higher moral and physical development.

The conception of a circumscribed place of punishment is admissible only as referring to the worlds whose low degree of physical advancement places them, for the time being, in the category of *worlds of expiation*, around which, swarms of discarnate spirits of low degree are always found, awaiting the new existences that will allow them to repair the evil they have done and will help them to advance.

19. A spirit always possesses his free-will, and his improvement is therefore sometimes slow and his persistence in evil very tenacious. He may, if he will, persist in his wickedness for years or for centuries; but a moment always comes when his obstinacy in defying the Divine justice breaks down under the continuance of suffering, and when, despite his foolhardiness, he confesses that the power which masters him is greater than his own. With the first glimmerings of his repentance, a gleam of hope is sent, by the Divine pity, to console and encourage the returning prodigal.

No spirit ever finds himself in the condition of being permanently incapable of improvement; were it otherwise, some spirits would be fatally doomed to remain forever in a state of inferiority, and would thus escape the action of the law of progress that regulates the destiny providentially imposed on all the beings of Creation.

20. Whatever may be a spirit's inferiority and perversity, *God never abandons him*. Every spirit has his guardian angel who watches over him, takes note of every movement of his soul, and endeavors to awaken in his mind good thoughts and the desire to progress and to make reparation, in a new existence, for the evil he has done. But this protecting guardian usually proceeds in his task occultly, without bringing any pressure to bear on his ward. A spirit must work out his own betterment *through the action of his own will*, and not as a consequence of any external constraint. He does right, or he does wrong, of his free choice, and without his choice being *decisively* influenced either for good or for evil. If he takes the path of evil, he undergoes the consequences of his error as long as he continues to follow the wrong road; as soon as he takes a single step in the opposite direction, he begins, at once, to experience the beneficial effect of his change of road.

³⁷ The requiring of the wrongdoer to make reparation for the evil he has done is so evidently just in principle that it may be safely accepted as the true law of moral rehabilitation. Yet the necessity of this reparation has never been proclaimed, as a doctrine, by any of the religions of the world.

The spiritist announcement of this necessity, as a Providential law, has met with opposition on the part of persons who think it would be more agreeable to do away with our misdeeds by the mere profession of repentance, at the cost only of a few words and with the aid of certain formulae. Such persons are free to imagine themselves to be able to escape, thus cheaply, the consequences of wrong-doing; they will see, by and by, whether the Divine Justice is satisfied by the mere admission, on the part of the wrong-doer, of having done wrong. Those who reject the spiritist doctrine of expiation should ask themselves whether the principle of expiation is not admitted, and rightly so, by human legislation, and whether the justice of God can be less than that of men? They should ask themselves whether they would be satisfied with the man who, having ruined them by a betrayal of their confidence, should simply tell them that he is sorry to have ruined them. Why should any one who has wronged another draw back from the obligation – fully accepted as a duty by all honest people – of repairing the wrong he has done, to the very utmost of his power?

When the certainty of having to make reparation for everything we have done amiss shall have become established in the minds of men, it will prove to be a rein far more effectual than the threat of hell-fire and of eternal punishment, both because the idea of Providential retribution, when thus presented, is seen to be altogether just and rational, and also because it explains the painful circumstances in which we find ourselves as being the result of our own wrong-doing, in our present life, or in a former existence.

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Observation - It would be a mistake to imagine that the certainty of arriving, sooner or later, at the state of perfection and happiness for which all spirits have been created, could encourage any spirit to persevere in evil, with the idea of repenting at some future period, in the first place, because a spirit of low degree is unable to foresee any termination of his present situation, and, in the second place, because each spirit, being the artificer of his own unhappiness, always comes to perceive in the long run, that it depends on himself to procure its cessation, that the longer he persists in evil the longer he will remain unhappy, and that, consequently, his suffering will endure forever unless he, himself, puts an end to it. *To go on sinning* is on the part of a spirit, to condemn himself, consciously and willfully, to a continuance of suffering. But if, on the contrary, the gate of hope were irrevocably closed, according to the doctrine of eternal punishment, against the suffering spirit, he would have no motive for repenting and amending, which could be of no avail for him.

The law we are considering triumphantly refutes the objection that the Divine prescience, in creating the souls that subsequently go wrong, cannot be allied to goodness, God, in creating a soul, necessarily foresees whether, in virtue of its free will, it will take the right or the wrong road; He knows that it will incur punishment if it goes wrong; but He also knows that this temporary chastisement is only a *means* for enabling it to understand its error, and for leading it into the right road, by which, sooner or later, it will reach the goal. According to the doctrine of eternal punishment, God, having known beforehand that such and such a soul would go wrong, created it with the knowledge that, by calling it into being, He was condemning it, beforehand, to endless tortures.

21. Each spirit is responsible only for his own wrong-doing; no spirit is punished for the wrong-doing of others, unless he has been the cause of their doing wrong, either by leading them astray, through his evil counsels or example, or by not helping them to do right when he had the opportunity of influencing them for their good.

For instance, he who commits suicide is always punished for so doing; but he who, by his unkindness, drive his fellow- creature to despair and to self-destruction, incurs punishment still more severe.

22. Although the punishments of the spirit-world are infinitely various, there are some which are inherent in the backwardness of the spirits, and which, being the consequences of that state of inferiority, are, in the main, the same for all spirits of that degree.

The punishment which is first experienced, especially among those who have attached themselves too closely to the earthly life while neglecting the interests of their spiritual advancement, consists in the slowness with which their soul effects its separation from the body, in the anguish which they feel on dying and which accompanies their awakening in the other life, and in the prolongation of the mental confusion so often attendant on dissolution, and which may continue for months and even for years. In the case of those, on the contrary, whose conscience is clear, who, during their earthly life, have identified themselves with the spiritual life and have detached their interests and affections from the things of this world, the separation of the soul and the body is effected rapidly and without painful shocks, the awakening into the other life is peaceful, and the mental confusion almost null.

23. Spirits of low moral advancement frequently fancy themselves to be still living the earthly life; and this illusion may last for many years, during which they experience all the wants, all the torments, and all the perplexities, incident to life in the flesh.³⁸

24. For the criminal, the incessant sight of his victims, and of the places and circumstances of his crimes, is the most harrowing of tortures.

25. Some spirits are plunged in utter darkness; others are in a state of complete isolation, *alone* in the midst of immensity, tormented by the ignorance in which they find themselves in regard to their whereabouts and the fate that may be awaiting them. Those who are the guiltiest are the prey of

³⁸ Vide, for the explanation of the perceptions, sensations, and sufferings of spirits, "*The Spirits' Book*," No. 257. — Tr.

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torments that are all the more overwhelming from their being unable to foresee any termination of their misery. Many are punished by being deprived of the sight of those they love. All, as a general rule, endure the sufferings they have caused others to endure, and with an intensity proportionate to the intensity of the suffering they have caused; and they continue to endure this retributive suffering until, through repentance and the desire to make reparation for the wrongs they have done, they obtain the relief which comes of their growing perception of the possibility of putting an end, *through their own efforts*, to the suffering they have brought upon themselves.

26. The torture of the proud is to see above him, surrounded and welcomed by the glorious spirits of the higher spheres, those whose superiority he failed to see, and whose humbler position he despised, when upon the Earth, while he finds himself relegated to the lowest rank; that of the hypocrite is to see himself pierced through and through by the light which lays bare his most secret thoughts, so that all may read them, without his having any means of hiding himself, or his real quality, from other eyes; that of the sensualist is to experience all the temptations, all the desires, without the possibility of satisfying them; that of the miser is to see his hoards wasted and scattered, and to be unable to do anything to retain his hold on them; that of the selfish is to be neglected by all about him and to suffer all the hardships and mortifications he has caused to others; he will be thirsty, and no one will give him to drink, he will be hungry, and no one will give him food; no friendly hand will meet his own, no compassionate voice will console him in his loneliness: *he thought only of himself during his earthly life; no one will think of him, or commiserate him, after his death.*

27. The only way to avoid, or to lessen, the painful consequences that our defects may entail upon us in our future life, is to free ourselves from those defects, as far as possible, in our present life; and we must also make reparation *now*, if we would not have to make that reparation by and by, and in some way that will be far harder to bear for having been delayed. The longer we put off the work of getting rid of our defects and of making reparation for whatever wrongs we have done to others, the more painful will be the consequences of the former, and the more severely shall we have to suffer in accomplishing the latter.

28. The situation in which a spirit finds himself on his entrance into spirit-life is exactly what he has made it for himself by his action in the earthly life he has quitted. After a time, another incarnation is granted to him in order that he may expiate and make reparation for the past by undergoing again the trials of the life in flesh; and he will derive more or less profit from this new incarnation, according to the use he makes in it of his free-will. If he fails to make a good use of his new existence, he will have to begin the trial over again, under conditions more and more difficult and painful; so that *he who suffers much in the present life may be very sure that he has much to expiate*, and, on the other hand, those who enjoy a seemingly prosperous life, notwithstanding their vices and their uselessness, may be equally sure that they will have to pay dear for their defects and their wrong-doing in a future existence. It was to the purifying and reparative effects of the earthly life that Jesus alluded to when he said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."³⁹

29. The mercy of God is, undoubtedly, infinite; but it is not blind. The guilty one whom He forgives is not exonerated from the necessity of making reparation for his evil deeds; and, until he has paid his debt to justice, he continues to undergo the consequences of those misdeeds. The assertion that the mercy of God is infinite must be understood as meaning that the Divine justice is not inexorable, and that it always leaves the door open to the prodigal who has returned into the homeward road.

30. The Providential punishments of wrong-doing being temporary and subordinated to *the repentance* and reparation which depend on the free-will of the wrong-doer, those punishments are at once the chastisement of wrong-doing and the medicines which will cure the moral malady to which that wrong-doing is due. The spirits who, in the spirit-life or in their new subjection to the trials of the

³⁹Vide "The Gospel According to Spiritism," chap. V.

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life in flesh, are made to undergo those punishments, are therefore not like galley-slaves, condemned to a fixed term of punishment, but rather like patients in a hospital, who suffer both from the malady they have contracted and also from the course of treatment required for their cure (and which is often extremely painful), but who have the hope of being cured, and whose cure will be all the more rapid in proportion to the fidelity with which they follow the prescriptions of the physician who watches over them with enlightened solicitude. If, from negligence or obstinacy, they prolonged their malady, they also prolong the period of their suffering; but, in that case, this prolongation is not the fault of their physician but their own.

31. To the sufferings of the spirit-world, which wrong-doing brings upon a spirit on his return to that world, succeed the sufferings of the life in flesh; sufferings which are, at once, the consequence of man's imperfections, of his passions, of the bad use he makes of his faculties, and the expiation of the faults committed by him in his present life and in the past. It is always in the life of flesh that a spirit repairs the evil he has done in his former corporeal existences, and that he puts in practice the resolutions he has formed in the spirit-life; a fact which explains and justifies the sorrows and troubles of human life which, at first sight, seem to be undeserved and uncalled for, but which are seen to be just and necessary, when we have learned that they are both payments of debts contracted by us in the past and the indispensable condition and means of our future advancement.⁴⁰

32. "But would not God," it is sometimes asked, "have given proof of greater love for His creatures, if He had created them perfect, and consequently exempted from the sufferings attendant on imperfection?"

To this query we reply that, in order to have exempted the beings of the universe from suffering, God must have created them perfect to begin with, having nothing to acquire in knowledge or in goodness. Undoubtedly, He could have done so; if He had not done so, it is because, in His wisdom, He has willed that the law of progress should be the law of creation.

Men are imperfect and, as such, are subject to vicissitudes more or less painful; this is a fact that we must accept, because it exists. But to infer from this that God is neither good nor just, would be to rebel against Him.

It would evidently have been unjust to create some beings more favored than others, endowed with privileges denied to those others, and enjoying, without their having worked for it, and as a free gift on His part, a degree of happiness that those other beings could only acquire through long and painful effort, or, perhaps, could never acquire at all. But the justice of God is triumphantly vindicated by the explanation of His Providential action, which shows us that *all spirits* are created on a footing of entire and absolute equality; that they all have the same starting-point; that no spirit, at his formation, is more favored than his fellows; that the ascensional career, which has to be accomplished by all spirits, is not rendered exceptionally easy for any of them; and that the spirits who have reached the highest degree have passed upwards, as all the others are now passing, from the same point of initial imperfection, by the same path of trial and effort.

This view of creation once admitted, what could be more perfectly just than the freedom of action that is accorded to each spirit? The road of happiness is equally open to all; the goals to be reached, and the conditions for reaching it, are the same for all. God has ordained that happiness shall be *the result of effort, and not of favor*, in order that each may obtain it as the result of his own individual merits; each is free to labor diligently, or to do nothing, for his own advancement; he who works hard and quickly gains his wage sooner; he who misemploys his energies, or loses his time, is longer in gaining the promised reward, but has only himself to thank for the delay. The choice between good and evil is free to all; gifted with free will, man is not fatally drawn to either.

⁴⁰ Vide chap. VI. *Purgatory*, No. 3 and on; and Chap. XX. *Instances of earthly expiation*: "The Gospel According to Spiritism," Chap. V, *Blessed are they that mourn*.

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33. Notwithstanding the diversity of the kinds and degrees of suffering which are undergone by imperfect spirits, the penal code of the future life may be summed up in the three following propositions:

1. Suffering is a condition of imperfection.
2. All our imperfections and all our misdeeds (which are the practical outcome of those imperfections) find their appropriate and necessary punishment in their own natural and inevitable consequences – just as every excess is punished by the malady which is caused by it, and as idleness is punished by the disgust of life to which it leads – without the need of any special sentence being passed on each particular fault of each individual.
3. Everyone has the power of freeing himself from his imperfections through the exertion of his will; everyone, therefore, is able to avoid the sufferings that are the consequence of those imperfections and to ensure his future happiness.

Such is the law of the Divine justice; “To each, according to the deeds done by his body:” a sentence which receives its execution both in the spirit-world and upon the Earth.

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CHAPTER VIII

ANGELS

ANGELS ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH – REFUTATION OF THE FOREGOING – ANGELS ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

Angels According to the Church

1. Materialism, denying the existence of spirit and admitting no other life than of the physical organism, has naturally relegated the idea of angels into the category of fiction and allegories. But all religions of the world have proclaimed, under various names, the existence of angels, that is to say, of beings superior to the human race, intermediate between God and men. The belief in those beings forms an essential part of the creed of the Christian Church, whose doctrine, in regard to their nature, is summed up in the following statement:⁴¹

2. “We firmly believe,” is the declaration of the Lateran Council, “that there is one sole and only God, eternal and infinite, who, *in the beginning of time*, drew both together, out of nothing, the two orders of creatures, viz., the Spiritual and Corporeal, the Angelic and the Physical, and who afterwards formed, as a mean between the two, the Human Order composed of body and spirit.”

“Such,” continues the *Pastoral* from which we are quoting, “is the divine plan in the work of creation; a plan at once majestic and complete, as befitted the eternal wisdom. Thus conceived, this plan presents to our mind the beings of the universe at every degree and in all conditions. In the highest sphere appear existence and life of a purely spiritual nature; in the lowest rank appear existence and life of a purely physical nature: and, in the interval which separates the two, a marvelous union of those two substances, a life which is shared by an intelligent spirit and an organized body.

“Our soul is in its nature simple and indivisible; but its faculties are limited. The idea we have of perfection enables us to comprehend that there may be other beings simple and indivisible like our soul, yet superior to it in qualities and in privileges. Our soul is great and noble, but it is associated with matter, served by frail organs, limited in its action and in its power. Why should there not be other natures still nobler, free from this slavery and from these obstacles, gifted with strength and activities incomparably greater? Before God placed man upon the Earth to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, must He not already have called other creatures into being, to form His celestial court and to adore Him in the dwelling place of His glory? It is from the hands of man that God receives the tribute of honor and the homage of the universe; is it strange that He should receive, from the hands of angels, the incense and the prayers of man? If the angels did not exist, the grand work of the Creator would lack the crowning perfection of which it is susceptible; this world, which attests the infinity of His power, would not be the master-piece of His wisdom; our mere human reason, weak and feeble though it may be, might easily conceive of something better and more complete.

“At every page of the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments, mention is made of these sublime intelligences, in pious evocations, or its historical incidents. Their intervention is manifestly shown in the lives of the patriarchs and the prophets. God employs their ministry, sometimes for the intimation of His will, sometimes for the announcement of events to come; He makes them, in almost every case, the organs of His justice or of His mercy. Their presence is seen in the various circumstances of the birth, the life, and the passion of the Savior; their memory is inseparable from

⁴¹ The statement quoted in the text is taken from the Lenten Pastoral of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Rheims, Cardinal Gousset, for 1864; but, as the doctrine of the various Christian sects is identical in regard to the nature both of *angels* and of *devils*, it may be regarded – like the statement in regard to the latter, drawn from the same source and quoted in our next chapter – as being a summary of the belief of all the Christian sects in reference to the subject we are considering.

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that of the great men and the most important facts of the earliest epochs of the ancient religiosity. It is found even in the bosom of polytheism, and under the fables of mythology; for the belief in their existence is as old and as universal as the world, and the worship paid by the Pagans to good and evil genii was only a false application of a truth, a degenerate reflex of the primitive dogma.

“The declarations of the holy Lateran Council contain a fundamental distinction between the angels and men. They teach us that the former are pure spirits, while the latter are composed of a soul and a body; that is to say, that the angelic nature is self-sustained, not only without any intermixture, but also without the possibility of any real association, with matter, no matter how light and how subtle we may suppose the latter to be, while our human soul, though also spiritual in nature, is associated with a material body in such a manner as to constitute, with that body, only a single person; and they teach us that *such is essentially the destiny of the human soul*.

“As long as this intimate union continues to exist between the soul and the body, these two substances have a common life and exercise a reciprocal influence on each other; the soul cannot enfranchise itself entirely from the state of imperfection imposed upon it by this union: its ideas reach it through the senses, from the comparison of external objects, and always under images more or less apparent. Hence the impossibility, for the soul, of conceiving of itself or of God otherwise than under the guise of some visible and palpable form. For the same reasons the angels, in order to render themselves visible to the Saints and the Prophets, have necessarily assumed the appearance of corporeality; but these appearances were only aerial bodies which they moved without identifying themselves with them, or symbolical representations in harmony with the mission which they were charged to fulfill.

“Their existence and movements are not localized and circumscribed in any fixed and limited point of space. Not being attached to a body, they cannot be stopped and bounded as we are by other bodies; they occupy no space and fill no void; but, just as our soul is entirely present in our whole body and in each of its parts, so they are in their entirety, and almost simultaneously, on all points and in all parts of the world; more rapid than thought, they can operate themselves everywhere in an instant and can operate of themselves, without any other obstacle to their designs than the will of God and the resistance of human liberty.

“While we are reduced to see, only little by little and within certain limits, the things which are outside of us, and while the verities of the supernatural order appear to us as an enigma and as though seen in a mirror, according to the expression of the Apostle Paul, they see, without effort, everything that they need to know, and are in immediate relationship with the object of their thought. *Their knowledge is the result, not of induction and reasoning*, but of the clear and profound intuition which embraces at once the principles and the species it contains, the principle and the consequences which flow from it.

“Distances of time, differences of place, multiplicity of objects, can produce no confusion in their minds.

The Divine Essence, being infinite, is incomprehensible; it contains mysteries and abysses that the angels cannot fathom. The private designs of Providence are hidden from them; but the secret of those designs is revealed to them by God, when, under certain circumstances, they are called by Him to announce them to mankind.

“The communications of God to the angels, and of the angels to one another are not made, as among us, by means of articulate sounds and other signs perceptible by the senses. Pure intelligences have no need of eyes to see, or of ears to hear, nor have they any vocal organ for manifesting their thought, this habitual intermediary of our communications not being needed by them; but they communicate their sentiments to one another in a way that is peculiar to themselves and altogether spiritual. In order to make themselves understood by one another, an act of their will suffices.

“God alone knows the number of angels. This number, undoubtedly, is not, and could not be, infinite; but, according to the sacred writers and doctors of the Church, it is prodigiously great. If it

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were natural to proportion the number of inhabitants of a city to its grandeur and extent, we must naturally conclude that, the Earth being only an atom in comparison with the firmament and the immense regions of space, the number of the inhabitants of Heaven and of the air are vastly greater than that of men.

“Since the majesty of kings derives its splendor from the number of their subjects, of their officers, and of their servants, what could give us a more fitting idea of the majesty of the King of kings than this innumerable multitudes of angels that people Heaven and Earth, the sea and the abysses, and the dignity of those glorious beings who remain forever bowed down, or erect, about His throne?

“The Fathers of the Church and the theologians teach, in general terms, that the angels are classed in three grand hierarchies or principalities, and each of these hierarchies, in three companies or choirs.

“Those of the first and highest hierarchy are designated according to their functions which they discharge in Heaven. Some of them are called *Seraphim*, because they burn, so to say, with the flame of charity kindled in their being by their contemplation of the love of God; others are called *Cherubim*, because they are the luminous reflex of His wisdom; others, again, are called *Thrones*, because they proclaim His greatness and are the manifestations of splendor.

“Those of the second hierarchy receive their names from the functions they exercise in the general government of the universe; they are, the *Dominations*, who assign their various missions and occupations to the angels of the lower degrees; the *Virtues*, who accomplish the prodigies required by the general interests of the Church and of the human race; and the *Powers*, who protect, by their strength and their vigilance, the laws which rule the physical and moral worlds.

“To those of the third hierarchy are entrusted the guidance of societies and of persons; they are styled *Principalities*, the managers of kingdoms, provinces, and dioceses; *Archangels*, who transmit to the world messages of high importance; and *Guardian Angels*, who accompany each of us throughout our earthly life, watch over our safety, and aid us in achieving our purification.”

REFUTATION

3. The fundamental assumption of the doctrine set forth in the preceding quotation is that the angels are beings purely spiritual, anterior, and superior, to the human race; *privileged creatures destined from their formation to absolute and eternal happiness*, and endowed by their very nature with the plentitude of virtue and of knowledge, without having done anything to acquire either the one or the other. They constitute the highest rank of the creation, the lowest rank being purely physical life; and between the two, is the human race, composed of souls, that is to say, of beings of a spiritual nature but inferior to the angels, united to physical bodies.

This theory is open to several very serious objections. What in the first place is the “purely physical life” referred to? Is it that of inanimate matter? But inanimate matter has no life of its own. Is it that of the plants and animals? But this would be to add a fourth order to the divisions of the creation already established, for it is indisputable that there is, in the intelligent animal, something that there is not in the plant, and equally indisputable that there is in the plant, something that there is not in stone. As for the human soul, it is in direct and immediate union with a body that is merely brute matter, for without a soul, the body has no more life than a clod of earth.

Such a division evidently lacks clearness and does not accord with the results of observation; it resembles the theory of the four elements that has been upset by the progress of physical science. But admitting, nevertheless, the three orders of beings assumed by the theory we are considering, viz., the *spiritual*, the *human*, and the *physical*, we have first to remark that there is no necessary union between these three orders, for they constitute three distinct and successive creations between each of

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which there is a solution of continuity; whereas everything in nature reveals the existence of an admirable law of unity, the elements of all beings being only transformations of one another, and everything being linked together into a continuous chain. The theory in question is true as regards the existence of the three orders of beings on which it is based, but it is incomplete; for it takes no note of the points of contact between them, as we are about to show.

4. The three orders of created beings are necessary, according to the declaration of the Church, to the harmony of the universe; to suppress either of them would be to render the work of the Creator incomplete, and to contravene the plan of the eternal wisdom. Nevertheless, one of the fundamental dogmas of the Church declares that the Earth, the animals, the plants, the sun, moon, and stars, and light itself, were created, drawn forth out of nothing, six thousand years ago. Consequently, before that epoch, there existed neither human beings nor any purely physical beings; so that, throughout the whole of the eternity of the past, the work of the Divinity had remained incomplete. The creation of the universe six thousand years ago is so strictly an article of faith among orthodox believers that, only a few years ago, science was anathemized because it had upset the chronology of the Bible by demonstrating the immense antiquity of the Earth and of its inhabitants.

Again; the Lateran Council – an Ecumenical Council whose decisions are accepted as law by the orthodox – says expressly: – “*We firmly believe* that there is but one sole true God, eternal and infinite, who, *in the beginning of time*, drew forward together, out of nothing, both orders of creatures, viz., the spiritual and the corporeal.” “*The beginning of time*” can only be understood, as referring to some epoch in the past, for time is infinite, like space; and “*the beginning of time*” is therefore merely a figure of speech implying some undefined anteriority. The Lateran Council, then, “firmly believes” that the spiritual and corporeal beings were created simultaneously, and that they “were drawn forth together, out of nothing,” at some undetermined epoch in the past. But, in that case, what becomes of the text of the Bible, which fixes the date of this creation at six thousand (of our) years ago? Even if we admit that date as the beginning of the visible universe, it certainly could not be “the beginning of time.” Which of these two statements are we to believe, that of the Council, or that of the Bible?

5. The same Council, moreover, laid down the following strange proposition: “Our soul,” says the ecclesiastical authority referred to, “equally spiritual (i.e., of a nature equally spiritual as the nature of the angels), is associated with the body in such a manner as to form with it only one and the same person, and *such is essentially its destination.*” If the soul’s essential destiny is to be united to the body, this union constitutes its normal state, its aim, its end, since such is its “*destination.*” But the soul is immortal and the body is mortal; its union with the body takes place according to the Church, but once, and even if it were prolonged for a century, what is such a span of time in comparison with eternity? For a great number of human beings, the union of the soul and body is only of a few hours; of what use can so ephemeral a union be to the soul? If, in comparison with eternity, the longest duration of the union of soul and body is a mere nothing, can it be correct to say that *its essential destination is to be united with the body*? The truth is that the union of the soul and body is but an incident, a speck, in the life of the soul, and not its “essential” state.

If it were the essential destination of the soul to be united to a material body; – if, in virtue of its nature and in accordance with the aim of Providence in its creation, this union is necessary to the manifestation of its faculties – it follows that, *without the body, the human soul is an incomplete being*; consequently, in order for the soul to remain what it is destined to be, it must necessarily, on quitting its material body, take another body of the same nature, which leads us inevitably to the doctrine of the plurality of existences, in other words, to the doctrine of the reincarnation of the soul, forever, in a succession of material bodies. It is really strange that a Council which is considered to be one of the lights of the Church should have so completely mixed up the spiritual being with the material being that the one cannot be conceived of as existing without the other, since the “*essential*” condition of their creation is to be united.

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6. The hierarchal picture of the angels, informs us that several orders of those beings are charged, in virtue of their attributes, with the government of the physical universe and of the human race, and that they were created for the purpose of doing this work. But, according to the Book of Genesis, the material world and the human race have only been in existence for six thousand years; what then, did the angels do before that epoch, through the eternity of the Past, seeing that the objects for which they were created were not in existence? Have the angels existed from all eternity? It is to be supposed so, since we are assured by the Church that they serve for the glorification of the Almighty; for, if they were created at any given epoch in the past, God must have remained, previously to that epoch – that is to say, throughout an eternity – without worshippers.

7. Further on, we find, in the *Pastoral* referred to, these words: “*As long as* this intimate union of soul and body lasts.” There comes, then, a moment when this union exists no longer? But this admission contradicts the declaration of the Lateran Council that this union is the “essential destination” of the soul.

The Prelate, summing up the views of the Christian Church, asserts, still further: “Ideas reach the soul through the senses, by the comparison of external objects.” This is a philosophic doctrine that is true to a certain extent, but not absolutely. According to the eminent theologian, it is a condition inherent in the nature of the soul not to receive any ideas otherwise than through the senses; he forgets the innate ideas, the faculties in some cases so transcendently developed, the intuitive knowledge of certain things, which some children bring with them at birth, and which they manifest without having received any instruction in regard to them. By which of the senses is it that children and other natural arithmeticians and algebraists, who have excited the wonder of the learned world, acquired the ideas necessary for the almost instantaneous solution of the most complicated problems? The same query has to be answered in regard to the various youthful musicians, painters, and linguists.

“The knowledge possessed by the angels,” says the *Pastoral* in question, “is not the result of induction and reasoning;” they know because they are angels, without having had any need of learning; God created them like this: the human soul, on the contrary, has to learn. If the soul receives ideas only through the bodily organs, what ideas can be possessed by the soul of an infant who died after a few days of life, if we suppose, with the Church, that he will not be born again into the earthly life?

8. We have here to consider a question of vital importance: – Does the soul acquire ideas and knowledge after the death of the body? If the soul can acquire nothing when separated from the body, that of the child, the savage, the idiot, the ignorant, will remain forever just what it was at death; in which case it is condemned to nullity throughout eternity.

If, on the contrary, it acquires knowledge after the close of the earthly life, it is evident that it can progress when separated from the body. The denial of the possibility of the soul’s progress after death leads to absurd consequences; the admission of the soul’s progress after death is the negation of all the dogmas based on the assumption of its stationary condition, of irrevocable condemnation, of eternal punishment, etc. But, if the soul can progress at all after death, what limit is there to its possibilities of progress? If it can go forward a single step, there is no reason why it should not continue to progress until it reaches the degree of angels or Pure Spirits. If the human soul can thus attain to the rank of angelhood, there was no need to create special beings to fill that rank, beings distinguished by special privileges, exempted from all labor, and enjoying eternal happiness without having done anything to earn it, while other beings, less favored only obtain the supreme felicity through long and cruel sufferings and as the result of heavy trials. God could doubtless have created such privileged beings had He chosen to do so; but if we admit the infinity of His perfections, without which He would not be God, we must also admit that He does nothing useless, nothing that would contradict His sovereign justice and His sovereign goodness.

9. “Since the majesty of kings,” continues the Prelate, “derives its splendor from the number of their subjects, of their officers, and of their servants, what could give us a more fitting idea of the

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majesty of the King of kings than this innumerable multitude of angels that people Heaven and Earth, the sea and the abysses, and the dignity of those glorious beings *who remain, forever, bowed down, or erect, about His throne?*”

But do we not abase the Divinity by thus assimilating His glory to the pomp of earthly sovereigns? The inculcation of such an idea in the ignorant minds of the masses gives them an utterly false impression in regard to His greatness; while, to represent that Being as requiring to have millions of worshipers remaining *“forever, bowed down, or erect, about His throne,”* is to attribute to Him the weakness, vanity, and haughtiness of Oriental despots. And what is it, in point of fact, that renders even earthly sovereigns veritably great? Is it the number and splendor of their courtiers? No; it is their goodness, their justice, their devotion to the interests of their subjects; it is to earn the title of “Father of their country.” We are asked whether anything “can give us a more fitting idea of the majesty of God, than the multitude of angels composing His court?” We reply, Yes, certainly, there is something much better calculated to do so; it is to represent the Divine Being as supremely good, just, and merciful for all His creatures, instead of representing Him as an angry, jealous, vindictive, inexorable, exterminating, and partial God, creating, for His own personal glory one set of creatures whom He loads with the most splendid privileges and favors in every possible way, bestowing on them eternal felicity as their birthright, while He creates another set of creatures under diametrically opposite conditions, compelling them to purchase their eventual happiness at the cost of long and terrible sufferings, and punishing a momentary error on their part with an eternity of torture!

10. Spiritism professes, in regard to the union of the soul and body a doctrine that is infinitely *more spiritualistic*, not to say, less *materialistic*, a doctrine which has, moreover, the merit of being in conformity with what observation has shown us to be the destiny of the soul. According to this doctrine, the soul is independent of the body, which is only its temporary garment; *its essence is spirituality; its normal life is the life of the spirit-world*. The body is merely an instrument for the exercise of its faculties in connection with the material world; but, when separated from the body, it uses its faculties with greater freedom and wider scope.

11. The union of the soul with a material body, though necessary to its progress in the early stages of its development, only takes place during the period which may be termed its infancy and youth; when it has attained to a certain degree of purification and dematerialization, this union is no longer needed by the soul, which thenceforth continues to progress in spirit-life. However numerous may be the corporeal existences of the soul, those existences are necessarily limited to the life of its successive bodies; and the sum total of those existences only comprises in any case an imperceptible fraction of the life of the soul, which is without end.

ANGELS ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

12. That there are beings endowed with all the qualities commonly attributed to angels cannot be, for those who admit the existence and progressibility of the soul, a matter of doubt. The spiritist revelation confirms on this point the belief of all peoples; but it also shows us the nature and origin of those beings.

Souls, or spirits, are created simple and ignorant, that is to say, without knowledge and without the consciousness of good and evil, but with the aptitude of acquiring, in knowledge and in morality, all that they lack, and which they will acquire through effort and labor. The aim of their creation – which is the attainment of perfection – is the same for all; but they attain this aim more or less quickly, in virtue of their free will and in proportion to the amount of their personal effort. All souls have the same degrees to pass through, the same task to accomplish. God does not grant larger means or an easier task to some than to others, because all of them are His children, and because, being just, He has no preference for any of them. He says to them all: – “I have established a law that is to be your rule of

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action; it, alone, can lead you to the aim of your being. Whatever is in conformity with this law is good; whatever is contrary to this law is evil. You are free to obey this law or to violate it; and you will thus be the arbiters of your own fate.” It is not God who has created evil; all His laws tend to ensure the happiness of His creatures: it is man, himself, who creates evil by infringing the laws of God; if he scrupulously obeyed those laws, he would never deviate from the path of rectitude and of happiness.

13. But the soul, in the early phases of its existence, is like a child, lacking experience; it is, therefore, subject to error. God does not give the soul experience, but He gives it the means of acquiring experience; every false step taken by the soul on the road of evil, keeps it back; it undergoes the consequences of this delay, but it thus learns, at its own expense, what it must avoid. It is thus that, little by little, the soul acquires development, effects its own improvement, and advances in the spiritual hierarchy, until it has reached the state of *fully purified Spirit* or *Angel*. The angels, then, are the souls of men who have reached the highest degree of perfection attainable by created existences, and who have entered upon the full enjoyment of the felicity for which they were created. Before attaining to the supreme degree, they enjoy degrees of happiness proportioned to their degree of advancement, but their happiness is never that of idleness, it consists in the functions to which they are called by the Almighty and which they rejoice to discharge, because the occupations of spirits are, for them, a means of progressing.⁴²

14. The human race is not restricted to the Earth; it occupies the innumerable globes that revolve in space. It has occupied those that have already disappeared in the eternity of the past; it will occupy those that will come into existence in the eternity of the future. God has always created, creates incessantly, and will always continue to create. Consequently, long before the Earth existed, however ancient we may suppose it to be, other spirits had already been incarnated on other globes, had accomplished the same stages of development that we, spirits of a later formation are now accomplishing, and had thus reached the supreme degree before we had issued from the hands of the Creator. From all eternity, therefore, there have always been “angels” or fully purified spirits; but, as the human phase of their development is lost in the night of ages, it seems to us as though they had always been “angels.”

15. Thus the grand law of the unity of the Creation is maintained inviolate. As God has never been inactive, there have always been fully-purified spirits who had already reached the “angelic” degree through trial, effort, and enlightenment, and had thus become fitted to transmit the volitions of the Almighty for the administration of every department of the universe, from the government of worlds to the management of the minutest details of their economy. There was, consequently, no need to create a class of privileged beings, exempted from the vicissitudes, necessities, and occupations imposed upon all the others; all the beings of the universe have won their respective grades through struggle and as the reward of their own merits; finally, all of them, from the oldest to the youngest, are the artisans of their own destiny. Thus is achieved the sovereign justice of God.

⁴² Vide chap. III. Heaven.

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CHAPTER IX

DEMONS

Origin of the Belief in Demons – Demons According to the Church – Demons According to Spiritism

ORIGIN OF THE BELIEF IN DEMONS

1. Demons have played, in all ages, a conspicuous part in the various theogonies; and although their hold on the general imagination is somewhat loosened at the present day, the influence which is still attributed to them by many, suffices to render the question of their existence and nature one of no little importance, because it touches the very groundwork of religious belief; for which reason it behooves us to examine this question with all the carefulness demanded by its scope and bearings.

The belief in a power superior to itself is instinctive in the human mind, and it is consequently found under different forms in all ages of the world. But if, notwithstanding the higher degree of intellectual advancement which men have reached at the present day, they are still disputing about the nature and attributes of that power, how much more imperfect must have been their notions concerning it in the infancy of the human race!

2. The picture that has been drawn of the innocence of the primitive peoples of the globe, absorbed in admiring contemplation of the beauties of nature is undoubtedly very poetic, but it lacks truthfulness.

The nearer man is to the state of nature, the more completely is he under the sway of instinct, as is still the case with savages and barbarians of the present day; what interests him most, or rather, what interests him exclusively, is the satisfaction of his physical needs, for he has no others. The special sense which alone can render him susceptible of mental pleasures is only developed gradually and in the course of time; the soul has its infancy, its youth, and its maturity, like the human body; but, in order to attain to the maturity which fits it for the comprehension of things of an abstract nature, how many evolutions must it accomplish in the human form! Through how many existences must it work out its progressive development!

Without going back to the earliest ages, we have only to look around us upon the rustics of our rural regions, in order to satisfy ourselves as to the amount of admiration awakened in their minds by the splendors of sunrise, the sublimity of the starry sky, the warbling of the birds, the murmur of the brook, the beauty of the meadows enameled with flowers! Their only thought about the rising of the sun is that it rises because it is in the habit of doing so, and, provided it gives heat enough to ripen the crops and not enough to burn them up, that all they think about the matter. If they look up in the sky, it is to see what sort of weather they are likely to have on the morrow; whether the birds sing or not is all one of them, so long as they do not devour their grain; they prefer the clucking of their hens and the grunting of their pigs to the song of the nightingale; all they ask of the brook, be it clear or muddy, is not to dry up and not to overflow their fields, and, if these only yield good grass for their cattle and sheep, they care nothing whatever about the flowers; the success of their farming operations is all they ask – it is all they understand – of Nature; and yet they are already very far above the level of the primitive races!

3. If we carry back our thought to the latter, we find them still more exclusively absorbed in the satisfying of their physical wants; what sub-serves this end, and what contravenes it, constitute for them the entire sum of “good” and of “evil.” They believe in the existence of a superhuman power;

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but, as they are most impressed by whatever causes them some physical or worldly injury, they attribute all such occurrences to that power, of which, nevertheless, they have only a very vague idea. Not being yet capable of conceiving of anything beyond the visible and tangible world, they imagine that power to reside in the beings and the things that are injurious to them. Ferocious or mischievous animals are, therefore, regarded by them as being the direct and natural representatives of the occult power that they recognize without understanding it. For the same reason, whatever is useful to them is regarded as being the personification of a beneficent power; hence the worship rendered to certain animals, to certain plants, and even to inanimate objects. But men, as a general rule, are more keenly alive to evil than to good; whatever is the beneficial seems to them to be perfectly natural, whereas what is injurious seems to them abnormal and consequently affects them more sensibly. For this reason we find, in all the primitive forms of worship, that the ceremonies in honor of the maleficent power are much more numerous than those which are performed in honor of the beneficent one; the empire of fear in the primitive mind, being much stronger than that of gratitude.

For a long time, the human race knew nothing of “good” or “evil” excepting as connected with physical conditions; the awakening of the perception of moral good and moral evil marked the attainment of a new degree of progress by the human intellect. It was only when this step had been made that the human mind obtained a glimpse of spirituality, and began to understand that the superhuman power does not reside in any of the objects of the material universe, but exists outside the boundaries of the visible and the tangible. This conviction was arrived at by the most advanced intelligences of the ancient world; but even those intelligences were unable to carry their speculations and inductions beyond certain narrow limits.

4. As, on the other hand, men perceived the fact of an incessant struggle between good and evil and saw that the latter frequently triumphed over the former, and as, on the other hand, they could not rationally admit that evil was the work of a beneficent power, they naturally concluded that there were two rival powers, sharing between them the government of the world. Thence arose the doctrine of the two principles, that of good and that of evil; a doctrine reasonable for the period in which it took its rise, for the human mind had not then acquired the capacity of conceiving of anything higher, and of divining the existence of the Supreme Being as beyond, and above, the strife of opposing principles. How was it possible that the men of the primitive time should understand that evil is only a passing phase from which a greater good is to be educed, and that the evils which afflict the human race must necessarily lead it on to happiness, by compelling it to move forward on the path of progress? The narrowness of man’s mental horizon prevented him seeing anything beyond his present life, either before or behind him; he could neither comprehend that he had already progressed nor that he would continue to progress; still less could he see that the vicissitudes of life are the result of the imperfections of the spiritual being which animates the body, which is pre-existent to and survives his external form, and that it is the destiny of this being to refine itself by passing through a series of successive existences until it has attained to the state of perfect purity. In order to comprehend that good can be brought out of evil, it is necessary to see more than a single existence and to contemplate the career of the soul in its totality; for it is only this broad view of the matter that can enable us to comprehend the causes and the effects of the vicissitudes of human existence.

5. The recognition of the two principles of good and evil constituted, during many ages and under different names, the basis of all the religious creeds of the world. These two principles were personified under various names, as Oromaze and Ahriman among the Persians, Jehovah and Satan among the Hebrews, etc. But, as every sovereign must have his Ministers, all those creeds admitted the existence of secondary powers, or genii, of which some were supposed to be good and others to be evil. The Pagans personified these genii in an innumerable multitude of individualities, each of who had his special attributes of vice or of virtue, and all of who were classed under the generic name of “gods.” The Hebrews personified these secondary powers under the designations of “angels” and “devils,” which have been subsequently borrowed from them by the Christians and Muslims.

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6. The doctrine of devils or demons, then, has grown out of the ancient belief in the two principles of good and evil. We have only in this place to examine that doctrine from the Christian point of view, and to inquire whether, as embodied in the creed of Christendom, that doctrine is conformable with the clearer knowledge that, at the present day, we have acquired in relation to the attributes of the Divine Being.⁴³

The idea which we form to ourselves of those attributes is necessarily the starting-point, the basis, of our religious belief; dogmas, modes of worship, ceremonies, usages, codes of morality, all are shaped by the idea, more or less true, more or less lofty, which we make to ourselves of God, from the lowest form of fetishism to the purest conception of Christianity. Although *the essential* nature of the Divine Being is still a mystery unfathomable by our intelligence, it is nonetheless true that, thanks to the teachings of Christ, we are able to form ourselves a clearer conception of the *moral attributes* of that Being than was possible in the earlier period of the world's development. Those teachings, in accordance with the inductions of reason, assure us that: –

God is one, unique, eternal, unchangeable, non-material, almighty, sovereignly just and good, infinite in His perfections.

As we have shown elsewhere (chap. VI. Eternal Punishment, Item. 10), “The attributes of God, being infinite, are not susceptible of increasing or of diminishing; otherwise, they would not be infinite, and God would not be perfect. If the smallest particle were taken from any one of His attributes, He would no longer be God, for there might be some other being more perfect than He.” These attributes, in their most complete and absolute plenitude, are therefore the criterion of all religions, the test of the truth of each of the doctrines taught by them. *No doctrine of any religious creed can be true if it were in contradiction with any of the perfections of God.* Let us see whether the doctrine of demons, as commonly taught by the various churches Christendom, can stand the application of this test.

DEMONS ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH

7. According to the Church, Satan, the Chief or King of the Demons (or Devils) is not an allegorical personification of the principle of evil, but is, on the contrary, a *real being* doing nothing but evil, while God, on the other hand, does nothing but good. Let us, therefore, examine the being thus presented to us, with the characteristics attributed to him by those who represent him as a real, living, active personality. Has Satan existed from all eternity, like God, or is he posterior to God? If he has existed from all eternity, he is *increate*, and is consequently equal with God. In that case, God is no longer *one, unique*; there is the God of Good and the God of Evil.

Is he posterior to God? If so, he is a creature of God, in which case, as he does nothing but evil and is incapable of doing good or of repenting, God has voluntarily created a being doomed to do evil to all eternity. Even admitting that evil is not the work of God, yet, if it be the work of one of His creatures who has been by Him predestined to do evil, God is nonetheless the author of evil, and, if so, He is not infinitely good. The same reasoning holds good in relation to all the evil beings designated as “devils” or “demons.”

8. The view of the nature of Satan and his servants just examined was, for a long time, the belief inculcated by the Church in regard to them. At the present day, the belief in regard to demons is as follows:⁴⁴

⁴³ Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*,” Book First, Chap. I, Nos. 10 and on. – Tr.

⁴⁴ The following quotations are taken from the Lenten-Pastoral of Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Rheims, for 1865. From the personal worth and exalted position of the author here quoted, these extracts may be regarded as expressing the latest opinion of the Catholic Church upon the subject of demons; an opinion shared by all the orthodox churches of Christendom.

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“God, being essential goodness and essential holiness, did not create them evil and maleficent. His paternal hand, whose pleasure it is to bestow on its entire works a reflex of His infinite perfections, had originally laden them with the most magnificent gifts. To the super eminent qualities of their nature, God added munificences of His favor. He made them in all respects similar to the sublime spirits who inhabit the region of glory and felicity; disseminated among all the orders of those glorious spirits and mingled with all their ranks, they were called to the same aim and the same destiny; their Chief was the most beautiful of the archangels. They might all have merited to remain forever in the path of righteousness, and might thus have obtained admission to the enjoyment of the eternal happiness of Heaven. This last favor would have been the crown of all the other favors of which they had been the objects; but it was to be the reward of their docility, and they rendered themselves unworthy of it, and lost it by a revolt equally audacious and insensate.

“What was the rock on which their perseverance was wrecked? Of what truth did they lose sight? What act of faith or of adoration did they refuse to God? *The Church and the annals of Sacred History do not enlighten us explicitly in regard to these points; but it appears certain that they failed to acquiesce in the meditation of the Son of God for themselves, and in the exaltation of the human nature of Jesus Christ.*

“The Divine Word, by whom all things were made, is also the sole Mediator and Savior in Heaven and upon the Earth. The supernatural destiny of an eternal existence has only been granted to angels and to men in view of the incarnation and merits of the Divine Word; for there is no proportion between the merits of the most eminent spirits and the recompense of eternal life, which is a sharing of the attributes of God Himself; no creature could have attained to such an exaltation but for the intervention of this marvelous and sublime charity of the Son of God. But, in order that the latter should bridge over the infinite distance which separates the Divine Essence from the creatures which are the works of its hands, it was necessary that the Word should unite in His own person the two extremes, that He should associate His Divinity with the nature of the angels or with the nature of men; and He chose the latter.

“This intention, conceived from all eternity, was revealed to the angels long before its accomplishment; the God-Man was shown to them in the future as He who was to confirm them in grace and to introduce them into glory, on condition that they should adore Him on the Earth during His mission, and in Heaven throughout the ages of eternity. An un hoped-for Revelation, a wonderful Vision, ravishingly delightful for all generous and grateful hearts; but a profound mystery, overwhelming for the pride of arrogant and haughty spirits! The supernatural endowment, the immense weight of glory, thus offered to their acceptance, was not, then, to be simply and solely the recompense of their personal merits! They could never, throughout eternity, attribute to themselves the title and the possession of this immense and magnificent endowment! A Mediator between them and God! What an insult to their dignity! The preference gratuitously accorded to the human race, what an injustice to themselves! What an infringement of their rights! Were they, one day, to behold the human nature, so inferior to their own, deified by its union with the Word, and seated at the right hand of God, on a throne of resplendent glory? Should they consent to offer eternally, to that lower nature their homage and their adoration?

“Lucifer and the third part of the angels succumbed to these proud and jealous thoughts. Saint Michael, and with him the greater number of angels, exclaimed, ‘who is like unto God? He is the Master of His gifts, and the Sovereign Lord of all things! Glory to God and to the Lamb that is to be slain for the salvation of the world!’ But the Chief of the rebels, forgetting that it was to his Creator he owed his nobility and his prerogatives, listened only to his own rash anger, and cried, ‘It is I, myself, who will ascend into Heaven; I will establish my dwelling above the stars; I will seat myself on the Mount of Alliance, on the flanks of the North wind; I will rise above the highest clouds, and I will be as the Almighty!’ Those who shared his sentiments received his words with a murmur of applause; he

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found sympathizers in every rank of the hierarchy; but their numbers did not screen them from the chastisement they had incurred by their rebellion.”

9. The doctrine thus set forth is open to several objections.

1st. If Satan and the other demons were angels, they must have been perfect; but how, being perfect, could they fail in their allegiance to God and set at naught His authority, standing as they did, in virtue of their perfection, in His very presence? If they had only reached the supreme degree gradually, and after having passed up through the successive stages of imperfection and of improvement, we might imagine the possibility of a backsliding on their part; but what renders the statement absolutely incomprehensible is that it represents them as having been created perfect.

The consequence of this theory is the following: – God must have supposed, when He created them, that He had created perfect beings, since He lavished upon them all the most splendid of His gifts, but He was mistaken; so that, according to the Church, God is not infallible.⁴⁵

2nd. As neither “the Church” nor “the annals of Sacred History” give us any explanation of the cause which led to the revolt of the angels against God, and as it only “*appears* to be certain” that this cause was their refusal to acquiesce in the future mission of Christ, what value can we attach to the description, so precise and so detailed, of the scene which is represented as having taken place on that occasion? From what source have been obtained the words so distinctly reported as having been then pronounced, and the knowledge of even the “murmurs” of the host of rebellious angels? Either the scene so minutely described is true, or, it is not true. If it were true there can be no uncertainty as to the cause of the angelic rebellion, and, in that case, why does the Church not settle the question once and for all? If, on the other hand, the Church and the Sacred History are silent on the subject, if it only “*appears* to be certain” that the cause of that revolt was what it is stated to be, the explanation thus given is only a supposition, and the description of the scene is merely a work of imagination.⁴⁶

3rd. The words attributed to Lucifer betray a degree of ignorance altogether surprising on the part of an archangel who, in virtue of his nature and the rank assigned to him, ought not to share the errors and prejudices that were common to mankind before science had enlightened them in regard to the nature of the universe. How could so exalted a being give utterance to the declaration “I will establish my dwelling above the stars, I will ascend above the highest clouds?” Such a declaration implies the old belief that the Earth is the center of the universe, that the region of the clouds extends to the stars, that the stars occupy a limited region forming a vault above our heads, whereas astronomy shows us that there is an infinity of stars, sown broadcast over the infinity of space. It is well known, at the present day, that the region of the clouds does not extend farther than a couple of leagues from the

⁴⁵ This monstrous doctrine is affirmed by Moses when he says (*Genesis*, Chap. VI. 6 and 7), “And the Lord *repented* that He had made man upon the earth. And, being grieved to the bottom of His heart, He said, ‘I will exterminate man whom I have created from off the face of the earth; I will exterminate every thing, from man to the beasts, every creeping thing, and the birds of the air, for I *repent* of having made them.’”

And God who “repents” of what he has done is neither perfect nor infallible, and, consequently, is not God. Yet this statement is declared by the Church to be a sacred verity. Moreover, it is not easy to see what the animals had to do with the perversity of mankind, or in what way they could have deserved extermination.

⁴⁶ We find in Isaiah, chap. xiv, 11 and the following verses, this passage: – “Thy pride has been hurled down to hell; thy dead body is fallen to the ground; thy bed shall be rottenness, and thy covering shall be worms. How didst thou fall from Heaven, Lucifer, thou who appearedst so brilliant at the break of day? How hast thou been thrown down to earth, thou who smotest the nations, who sadist in thy heart, ‘I will ascend into Heaven, I will establish my throne above the stars of God; I will seat myself on the Mount of Alliance on the flanks of the Northwind; I will place myself above the highest clouds, and I will be as the Almighty?’ And nevertheless thou hast been hurled from thy glory into hell, to the bottom of the abysses. Those who see thee will draw near to thee and, having looked upon thee, will say: ‘Art thou *the man* who filled the world with fear, who sent terror into the kingdoms, who made the earth a desert, who destroyed cities, and who kept in chains those whom he has taken captive?’”

These words of the prophet do not refer to any revolt of the angels, but are an allusion to the pride and the fall of the king of Babylon who had kept the Jews in captivity, as is shown by the concluding verses. The king of Babylon is designated, figuratively, as Lucifer; but no mention is made of the scene described above. The utterances put into his mouth are those of the king who, in the pride of *his heart*, placed himself above God, whose “peculiar people” he held in captivity. The prediction of the deliverance of the latter, of the ruin of Babylon and the defeat of the Assyrians, is the only subject treated of in the whole of this chapter.

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surface of the Earth; consequently, to talk of “ascending above the highest clouds” and “the mountains” implies that the speaker is upon the surface of the Earth, and, still further, that the surface of the Earth is the dwelling-place of the angels; for, if they inhabited the higher regions, it would have been superfluous for him to declare that he was going to “ascend above the clouds.” To attribute, to the angels, statements bearing the stamp of ignorance is equivalent to asserting that men, at the present day, know more than angels. The Church has always made the mistake of ignoring the progress of natural science.

10. To the first of these objections, the supporters of the legendary assumption we are examining oppose the explanation contained in the following passage of the Pastoral from which we have already quoted: – “Scripture and tradition give the name of ‘Heaven’ to the region in which the angels were placed at the moment of their creation. But this region was not the Heavens of Heavens, the Heaven of the Beatific Vision, in which God shows Himself, face to face, to the elect, and in which the elect behold Him without effort and without clouds; for, in that supreme abode, there is neither the danger nor the possibility of sinning; temptation and weakness are therein unknown; righteousness, joy, and peace reign there in absolute security; holiness and glory are native to that clime. Evidently, then, the angels were placed in another celestial region, a luminous and happy sphere, in which these noble creatures, so largely favored with divine communications, were to receive and to hold fast to the intimations of the Divine Will in the humility of faith, before being admitted to behold their full reality in the very essence of God.”

From this quotation it appears that the fallen angels belonged to a category of beings of a less elevated nature than the inhabitants of the supreme abode; that they were less perfect than these, and that they had not yet attained to the supreme degree of perfection in which faultiness is impossible. Granted; but, in that case the assumption we are examining is seen to involve a contradiction, for we are explicitly told, in the preceding quotations, that “God, had created them, *in all respects, similar to the sublime spirits;*” that, disseminated among all the orders of those glorious spirits and mingled with all their ranks, they were called to the same aim and the same destiny; that their Chief was the most beautiful of the archangels. But if the angels who fell were in all respects similar to the others, they could not have been of a nature inferior to those others; if they were mingled with all the ranks of the other spirits, they could not have been placed in any special region. Our objection, therefore, subsists in all its force.

11. There is, however, another point asserted in the statement we are considering, which is of still greater seriousness and importance.

We are told: “This design (the meditation of Christ), *conceived from all eternity*, was manifested to the angels long before its accomplishment.” God knew, then, from all eternity, that the angels, as well as men, would stand in need of this mediation. He did, or did not, know that some of the angels would fall; that this fall would cause them to be damned to all eternity without any hope of rehabilitation; that they would be destined to tempt men to evil, and that those among the latter who should allow themselves to be seduced by their tempting would share the same fate. If God knew this, it follows that He created these angels on purpose that they might bring irreparable ruin upon themselves and upon the greater part of the human race. Let the advocates of this doctrine twist the matter as they will; it is impossible to reconcile the creation of these angels *for a fate of misery thus foreseen*, with the sovereign goodness. On the other hand, if God did not foreknow the consequences of His creative action, He is neither all wise nor all-powerful. In either case, such action on the part of the Deity would be a negation of two of the attributes without which, in their plenitude, God would not be God.

12. If we admit the fallibility of the angels, as of men, we can understand their fall as being the consequence of their imperfection, and their punishment as being the just and natural consequence of their wrong-doing; and if we admit, at the same time, the possibility of their redeeming this wrong-doing by a return to rectitude, and their regaining the favor of God through repentance and expiation,

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there is nothing in such a supposition in any way opposed to the goodness of the Creator. In that case, God knew that they would fail, and that they would thereby incur punishment; but He also knew that the temporary chastisement they would bring upon themselves would be the means of making them understand their fault, and that it would thus turn their advantage, in accordance with the declaration of the prophet Ezekiel: – “God willeth not the death of the sinner, but his salvation.”⁴⁷ But the inutility of repentance and the impossibility of a return to the right path would be the negation of this goodness; and, if such a hypothesis were admitted, it would be strictly true to say: – “Since God could not be ignorant of the fate awaiting them, these angels were doomed from their very creation, to do evil forever, and were predestined to become devils and to draw men into evil.”

13. Let us now inquire what is the fate of these beings and what they are doing.

“Scarcely had their revolt broken out in the language of spirits, that is to say, in the outgoings of their thoughts, than they were banished irrevocably from the Celestial City and hurled down into the abyss.

“By these words, we mean that they were driven into a place of torment, in which they undergo the punishment of fire, according to these words which are given in the Gospel as having been spoken by Christ Himself: – ‘Go away, ye accursed, into the everlasting fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Saint Peter says expressly that ‘God has given them up to the chains and tortures of hell,’ but all of them will not remain in it forever; it is only at the end of the world that they will be shut up in it forever, with the reprobate. At the present time, they are still permitted by God to occupy a place in the creation to which they belong, in the order of things to which their existence is attached, and in the relations with men that they make a most pernicious misuse. While some of them are in their dark abode, where they serve as instruments of the Divine justice against *the unhappy souls that have been seduced by them*, an infinity of others forming invisible legions under the command of their chiefs, reside in the lower strata of our atmosphere and move about in every direction throughout the globe. They busy themselves with everything that goes on down here, and take a very active part in almost all the concerns of men.”

Of the words of Christ concerning “everlasting fire,” we have already treated in the Fourth Chapter of the present work, in connection with the question of “Hell.”

14. According to the doctrine we are examining, only a part of the devils are in Hell; the rest of them are roving about in freedom, intermeddling with all that is going on upon the Earth, and gratifying themselves by doing evil; and they will continue to do so until the end of the world, which period, as yet indeterminate, is probably not destined to arrive very speedily. Why this difference in the fate of these two divisions of the race of demons? Is it the least wicked of them that are thus left at liberty to roam through the world of men? Judging from the quality of the actions of those who are left at liberty, this would hardly be the case. Perhaps, however, the two divisions are let out into the world alternately, each in its turn; an arrangement that would seem to be implied in the words “*While some of them are in their dark abode, where they serve as instruments of the Divine justice against the unhappy souls that have been seduced by them.*”

It appears, therefore, that the appointed function of these fallen angels is to torment *the souls they have seduced*. They are not charged to punish those who are guilty of faults freely and voluntarily committed, but only those who have done wrong in consequence of the incitements to wrongdoing that they themselves (the devils) have brought to bear on them! They are thus, at once, the cause and the chastisers of the sins of their victims, and moreover – what human jurisprudence, imperfect though it be, would never sanction – the victim who succumbs, through weakness, to the temptation which these devils contrive to throw in his way for the express purpose of leading him astray, is punished as severely as the tempter who employs his superior cunning and clearness in inducing him to do wrong;

⁴⁷ See above, Chap. VII, No. 20.

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in fact, the victim of superior cunning and malignity is punished more severely than the tempter who misled him, for on quitting the Earth he is sent straight to Hell, from which he will never be let out for a single minute, and where he is made to suffer in its fires without a moment's relaxation of his tortures, through all time as well as through all eternity, while the devils, who were the original cause of his wrong-doing, enjoy a respite from punishment, and full liberty to go on in the enjoyment of their evil doings until the end of the world! Is the justice of God, then, still more defective than that of men?

15. Nor is this all. We are told that the devils "are still permitted by God to occupy a place in creation to which they belong, and in the relations which they were intended to have with mankind, relations of which they make a most pernicious misuse." But could God be unaware of the misuse that they would make of the liberty He grants to them? If He foresaw this misuse of their liberty, why did He grant them such liberty? Are we to believe that being fully aware of what He was doing, God abandoned His creatures beforehand to the mercy of devils, knowing, in virtue of His infinite prescience, that those creatures in their weakness and inexperience would succumb to the temptings of the devils and incur their doom? Must He not have foreknown that their own weakness would be quite enough for His creatures to have to struggle against, without His allowing them to be incited to the commission of evil by a foreign enemy, and one that would be all the more dangerous because he is invisible? Such an abandonment would be cruel enough, even if the chastisement to which it led were only temporary, and if the wrong-doer could obtain his release by repenting and making reparation for his misdeeds. But, no; he is condemned to all eternity; his repentance, his return to right sentiments, his remorse, and his regrets, all are absolutely unavailing!

According to this doctrine, demons, or devils, are agents specially predestined to recruit souls for Hell, and this, with the permission of God, who foreknew in creating these souls the doom which awaited them. What would be thought, upon the Earth, of a judge who should resort to such an expedient for filling the prisons? And does not such a doctrine give a strange idea of the Divinity of a God whose essential attributes are infinite justice and infinite goodness? And it is in the name of Jesus Christ, of him whose teachings breathed only love, charity, and forgiveness that such a doctrine is proclaimed! There was a time when such an anomaly might pass unnoticed; the contradiction of such a doctrine with the attributes of the Divinity was not understood, and, consequently, not felt as such; men, bowed beneath the yoke of despotism, submitted blindly, abdicating their reason; but, at the present day, the era of emancipation has come; man has acquired the notion of justice, he demands justice during his life and after his death; and he therefore replies, when this doctrine is set before him, "It is not true, it cannot be true, or God would not be God!"

16. "Chastisement everywhere pursues these fallen and accursed beings; wherever they go, they carry their Hell with them; they know neither peace nor rest; the sweetness of hope is changed for them into bitterness; it is odious to them. The hand of God has smitten them in the very instant of their fault, and their will has hardened itself in evil. Having become perverted, they refuse to cease to be such, and such they will persist in being forever.

"They are, since their fall, such as man is after death; *their rehabilitation is therefore impossible*; their state of perdition is irrevocable, and they persevere in their haughtiness towards God, in their hatred against His Christ, and in their jealousy of the human race.

"Not having been able to take possession of the glory of Heaven through their vaulting ambition, they do their utmost to establish their empire upon the Earth and to banish thence the reign of God. The word made flesh has accomplished, in spite of them, his designs for the salvation and the glory of the human race; all their means of action are therefore consecrated to the work of robbing him of the souls he has brought back; cunning and importunity, lies and seduction, they bring them all into play to draw men into evil and to consummate their ruin.

"With such enemies, the life of man, from cradle to grave, can be, alas! nothing but a perpetual struggle, for they are powerful and unwearied in their attacks.

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“These enemies, in fact, are the same who, after having introduced evil into the world, have succeeded in covering the Earth with the thick darkness of error and of vice; the same who, during their long ages in the past, caused themselves to be worshipped as gods, and who reigned as masters over the peoples of antiquity; the same who, finally, still hold tyrannous sway over the regions of the Earth that are a prey to idolatry, and who foment discord and scandal even in the bosom of Christian communities.

“To comprehend the vastness of the resources possessed by them for the carrying out of their wickedness, it is sufficient to bear in mind *that they have lost nothing of the prodigious faculties which are the apange of the angelic nature*. Undoubtedly, the future and especially the things of the supernatural order, have mysteries which God keeps to Himself, and that they are unable to discover; but their intelligence is very superior to ours, because they perceive, at a glance, effects of their causes, and causes in their effects. This penetration permits them to announce, beforehand, events which are beyond the reach of our conjectures. Distance and the diversity of places are annihilated by their agility. More prompt than lightning, more rapid than thought, they may almost be said to be present at various points of the surface of the globe at the same time, and they are able to describe things that are taking place at a great distance, but which are seen by them, at the very time of their occurrence.

“The general laws by which God rules and governs this universe are not of their domain; they cannot contravene those laws, and consequently can neither make true predictions nor work real miracles; but they possess the art of imitating, and counterfeiting, within certain limits, the works of God. They know what phenomena result from the combinations of the elements, and they predict with certainty those that occur naturally, as well as those that they have the power of producing by their own action. Hence, the numerous oracles, the extraordinary occurrences, of which history, both sacred and profane, has preserved the remembrance and which have furnished the basis and the aliment of all superstitions.

“Their simple and immaterial substance renders them invisible to us; they are at our side without being perceived by us; they strike on our soul without striking on our ears; we imagine ourselves to be obeying our own idea, while we are undergoing their temptations and yielding to their fatal influence. Our dispositions, on the contrary, are known to them through the impressions that are made upon us by their wiles; and they usually attack us on our weak side. In order to seduce us more surely, they are accustomed to present to us temptations and suggestions adapted to our individual tendencies. They modify their action according to circumstances and to the special characteristics of each temperament. But their favorite arms are lying and hypocrisy.”

17. “Chastisement,” we are told, “follows them everywhere; they have neither peace nor rest.” But this assertion does not invalidate our observation in regard to the respite enjoyed by those who are not in Hell, respite all the less justifiable because, being out of Hell, they do all the more harm. Undoubtedly, they are not represented as being happy, as are the good angels; but we can count for nothing the liberty they enjoy? Although they have not the moral happiness that results from virtue, they are incontestably less miserable than their accomplices who are given over to the flames of Hell. And besides, for the wicked, there is a sort of enjoyment in doing ill in full liberty. Ask any criminal whether it is all the same to him to be shut up in prison or to be scouring the country and perpetrating every sort of scoundrelism at his ease? The position of the demons is exactly the same.

“Remorse,” we are told, “pursues them without truce and without mercy.” But the advocates of the doctrine in question forget that remorse is the immediate precursor of repentance if it were not the beginning of repentance itself; and the *Pastoral* on which we are commenting declares, “Having become perverted, they refuse to cease to be such, and such they will persist in being, forever.” But if they refuse to cease to be perverted, it is impossible that they should feel remorse; if they felt the slightest regret for having done evil, they would cease to do it, and would beg for pardon. Consequently, remorse is not any part of their chastisement.

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18. “They are, since their fall, such as man is after death; their rehabilitation is *therefore* impossible.” Whence comes this impossibility? It is difficult to understand how it should be a consequence of their similarity to man after death, a proposition that, moreover, is not very clear. Is this impossibility a result of their own will or of the will of God? If it be a result of their own will, such a determination on their part would imply their being utterly and absolutely depraved and hardened in evil; but, if so, it is impossible to understand how beings so entirely and thoroughly bad could ever have been *angels of virtue*, or how, throughout the eternity during which they were “mingled with all the ranks” of the good angels, they should never have betrayed the least symptom of their horrible nature. If, on the contrary, this impossibility be a result of the will of God, it is still less comprehensible that the Sovereign Goodness should inflict upon them, as a punishment, this impossibility of a return to virtue, after a single fault. The Gospel says nothing of the kind.

19. “Their state of perdition,” it is added, “is henceforth irrevocable, and they persevere in their haughtiness towards God.” But where would be the use of their not persevering in that haughty attitude, since repentance is altogether useless to them? If they had any hope of rehabilitation, no matter at what cost, they would have a motive for returning into the path of virtue; but, that being impossible, they have no motive for reforming. If, then, they persevere in evil, it is because the door of hope is closed against them. But why has God closed that door against them? In order to avenge the offence against Himself of which they have been guilty in their want of submission. Thus, in order to glut His resentment against some of His creatures who have done wrong, He prefers to see them, not only plunged into horrible sufferings, but doing evil rather than doing good, leading astray and driving into everlasting perdition the majority of His creatures of the human race, when a simple act of clemency would have sufficed to prevent this great disaster, a disaster, that was foreseen by Him from all eternity!

Do the words, an act of clemency, imply a grant of forgiveness, pure and simple, which might be considered as offering an encouragement to wrongdoing? No, they only imply the granting of a conditional pardon, subordinated to a sincere return to virtue. But, instead of a word of hope and mercy, God is represented as saying: – “Perish the entire race of men rather than my vengeance!” And those who uphold such a doctrine are astonished that there should be skeptics and atheists! Is it thus that Jesus represents to us his Father? He who expressly lays it down as a law that we must forgive all those who offend us, who tells us to return good for evil, who places the love of our enemies in the first rank of the virtues by which alone we can merit the happiness of Heaven, would he require of men to be better, more just, more compassionate, than God Himself?

DEMONS ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

20. According to the Spiritist doctrine, neither “angels” nor “devils” are beings apart from the rest of the creation; all the intelligent beings of the universe are of one and the same nature. United to material bodies, they constitute the human race which populates the Earth and other inhabited worlds of the universe; freed from those bodies, they constitute the spirit-world, or the spirits who people space. God has created them *perfectible*; He has given them an aim, viz., the attainment of perfection and of the happiness that is the consequence of perfection; *but He has not given them perfection*; He has willed that they should owe it to their own personal efforts, so that they might have all the merit of its acquisition. From the first moment of their creation, they progress incessantly, either in the state of incarnation or in the life of the spirit-world; arrived at the culminating point of their purification they become *pure spirits*, or *angels*, according to the common expression; so that, from the embryo of the intelligent being to the angel, there is an uninterrupted chain, each link of which marks a degree in the scale of progress.

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It follows, therefore, that there are spirits at every degree of moral and intellectual advancement, according as they are at the top, the bottom, or the middle, of the ladder; and that, consequently, there are, among them, spirits of every degree of knowledge and ignorance, of goodness and of badness. In the lower ranks of spirits there are some who are still deeply imbued with the love of evil and who take pleasure in doing wrong; spirits who may perfectly well be called *demons*, for they are capable of all the misdeeds attributed to the latter. If Spiritism abstains from giving them that name, it is because the world has attached to it the idea of beings distinct from the human race, of a nature essentially bad, doomed to evil for all eternity, and incapable of progressing in goodness.

21. According to the doctrine of the Church, the demons were created good, and have become bad through their disobedience; they are “fallen angels;” they were placed by God at the top of the ladder, and they have fallen from that elevation. According to Spiritism, they are imperfect spirits who will grow better in the course of time; they are still at the foot of the ladder, but they will reach the top sooner or later.

Those who, through their carelessness, their obstinacy, or their perversity, remain longer in the lower ranks, incur the penalty of their persistence in evil, for the habit of wrong-doing renders their return to goodness all the more difficult; but there comes a time when they grow weary of the misery of such an existence and of the suffering which are its consequence; they begin to compare their own existence with that of the good spirits, they understand that it is for their own interest to return to the path of rectitude, and they endeavor to become better; but they do this of their own free will, and without being constrained to do so. *They are placed under the law of progress by the fact of their being capable of progressing, but they are not compelled to progress in spite of themselves.* God furnishes them incessantly with the means of progressing; but they are free to use or not use the means thus furnished. If progress were obligatory, there would be no merit in progressing, and God wills that each should have the merit of his action; He does not place any one of them on the front rank as matter of privilege, but that highest rank is open to all, and no one reaches it otherwise than through his own efforts. The highest angels have won their grade, like all others, and have traveled up to their present elevation by the same road.

22. Spirits, when they have reached a certain degree of purification, are entrusted with missions proportioned to their advancement; they fulfill all those that have been attributed to angels of different orders. God having created from all eternity, it follows that there have been, from all eternity, spirits competent to the discharge of all the duties involved in the government of the universe. A single species of intelligent beings, all alike submitted to the law of progress, suffices to produce the infinite variety of attainment, aptitude, and usefulness. This unity of the creation – in virtue of which all beings have the same starting-point, follow the same road, and raise themselves to higher and higher elevations as the result of their own merits – is far more in accordance with the justice of God than the creation of different species of beings, more or less favored in the way of natural gifts, which would be practically the creation of so many privileges.

23. The common doctrine concerning the nature of angels, demons, and the human soul, not admitting the existence of the law of progress, and observation having shown the existence of beings at different degrees of elevation, men have been led to conclude that these differences were the product of so many different creations. This the view of the subject places God in the light of an unjust and partial father, bestowing all his favors on some of his children, while imposing the hardest labors and privations on the others. It is not strange that during a long period men should have seen nothing objectionable in these assumed preferences, for they were guilty of the same injustice through the law of entail and the various privileges accorded to birth; could they believe they were capable of committing more errors than God? But, at the present day, the circle of ideas has become wider; men see more clearly; they have sounder notions of justice, they demand it for themselves, and, although they do not always find it upon the Earth, they hope, at least, to obtain it in Heaven; and, consequently,

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any doctrine, which does not show the Divine Justice in all its resplendent purity, is rejected by the human mind as repugnant at once to conscience and to reason.

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CHAPTER X

INTERVENTION OF DEMONS IN THE SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS OF THE PRESENT DAY

1. The modern spirit-phenomena have called attention to the facts of a similar character that have taken place at all epochs, and never has history been so thoroughly ransacked in search of those facts, as during the last few years. From the similarity of effects, men have inferred the action of one and the same cause. As in regard to all extraordinary facts of which the cause is unknown, ignorance has assumed the supernatural nature of the phenomena referred to, and superstition has amplified them by the addition of various absurdities; hence the mass of legends which, for the most part, are a mixture of a small amount of truth with a much larger amount of falsehood.

2. The doctrines concerning the devil, which have held sway for so long a period over the minds of men, had so enormously exaggerated the power he was supposed to possess, that they had, so to say, caused men to lose sight of God; for which reason, men gave the devil the credit of anything that seemed to surpass the possibilities of human power. Men saw the hand of Satan in everything; the most excellent innovations, the most useful discoveries, and especially those that tended to draw man out of his ignorance and to enlarge the circle of his ideas, have often been regarded as diabolical. Spirit phenomena, being at once of more frequent occurrence at the present day, and also – with the aid of riper reason and increased scientific knowledge – more intelligently observed than was the case in former times, have confirmed, it is true, the belief in the intervention of occult intelligences in the affairs of human life, but they have shown us that these intelligences always act within the limits of the law of nature and reveal, by their action, the existence of a force and of laws hitherto unknown to us. The question is therefore narrowed to the ascertainment of the order to which these intelligences belong.

While men possessed in regard to the spirit-world only vague or empirical notions, error, as to the nature of that world, was inevitable; but now that careful observation and experimental investigation have thrown new light on the nature of spirits, on their origin and destiny, on the part played by them in the universe, and on their mode of action, the question of their nature is answered by facts, and we know with certainty, that spirits are simply the souls of those who have lived upon the Earth. We also know that the various categories of good and evil spirits are not composed of beings of different species, but *of spirits at various degrees of advancement*. According to the rank which they occupy in virtue of their intellectual and moral development, those who manifest themselves do so under widely different aspects; but this does not prevent their having all issued from the great human family, as is the case with the savages, the barbarians, and the most highly civilized nations of the Earth.

3. Upon this point, as upon so many others, the Church maintains her ancient beliefs, in regard to demons. As we have already remarked, the mistake of the Church is precisely that of taking no account of the progress of human ideas, and of supposing God to be so deficient in wisdom as to fail to proportion revelation to the development of intelligence, and to continue to address, to the more advanced minds of the present day, the same language as that in which He spoke to the men of the primitive periods. If, while the human mind is marching onwards, the ministers of religion cling obstinately to past errors, in regard to spiritual matters as in regard to physical science, there necessarily comes a time when they are overwhelmed by the rising flood of incredulity.

4. We have now to see how the Church explains its assertion that the modern spirit-manifestations are exclusively due to the intervention of demons.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The quotations of the present chapter are taken from the same *Pastoral* from which we have taken those of the preceding chapters.

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“In their intervention in the things of the outer world, the demons are no less careful to dissimulate their presence, in order to avoid rousing the suspicion of those to whom they address themselves. Always cunning and perfidious, they draw men into their snares before binding them in the chains of oppression and servitude. Here, they awaken curiosity by puerile phenomena and feats of little moment; there, they strike with astonishment and subjugate the mind by the attraction of the marvelous. If the supernatural quality of their action betrays itself, if the nature of their power were unmasked, they calm alarm and appease apprehension, solicit confidence and invite familiarity. Every now and then, they pass themselves off as divinities and good genii; and sometimes, they borrow the names and even the traits of those of the dead who have retained a place in the memory of the living. With the aid of these frauds, worthy of the serpent of old they speak, and are listened to; they dogmatize and are believed; they mingle a few truths with their falsehoods and cause every form of error to be accepted by their victims. This is the aim of the pretended revelations from beyond the grave; it is to obtain this result that wood, stone, forests and fountains, the sanctuary of idols, the legs of tables, the hands of children, deliver oracles; it is for this that the pythoness prophesies in her delirium, and that the ignorant, in his mysterious sleep, is suddenly transformed into a doctor of science. To deceive and to pervert – such is, in all places and at all epochs, the sole aim of these strange manifestations.

“It being impossible that the surprising results of these observances or actions, for the most part, eccentric and absurd, should be due either to any intrinsic virtue of their own *or to the order established by God*, they can only be produced with the help of occult powers. Such are, especially, the extraordinary phenomena obtained, at the present day, through the processes, seemingly inoffensive, of mesmerism and the intelligent organ of talking tables. By means of these operations of modern magic, we now witness the reproduction, among ourselves, of the evocations, oracles, consultations, cures, and other prodigies that formerly gave renown to the temples of idols and the dens of Sybil’s. As in ancient times, men impose their commands on wood, and the wood obeys them; they question it, and it replies to their queries in every tongue and on every subject; they find themselves in the presence of invisible beings who usurp the names of the dead, and whose pretended revelations bear the stamp of contradiction and falsehood; vaporous forms without consistency suddenly appear and show themselves to be endowed with superhuman force.

“What are the secret agents of these phenomena and the real actors in the inexplicable scenes? The angels would not play a part so unworthy, nor lend themselves to the caprices of a vain curiosity. The souls of the dead, whom God has forbidden us to consult, are in the realm of sojourn assigned to them by His justice, and cannot without His permission, place themselves at the orders of the living. The mysterious beings who thus respond to the call of *the heretical and the impious as readily as to that of the faithful*, of the criminal as of the innocent, are neither envoys of God nor the apostles of truth and of salvation, but are the tools of error and of Hell. Despite the pains they take to hide their real nature under the most venerable names, they betray themselves by the hollowness of their doctrines, no less than by the baseness of their doings and the incoherence of their utterances. They strive to efface from the sum of religious belief, the dogmas of original sin, of the resurrection of the body, of eternal punishment, and of the Divinity of the Sacred Scriptures, in order to deprive the law of its sanction, and to open the gates to the influx of every vice. If it were possible for their suggestions to obtain the upper hand, they would form a convenient religion, just the thing for socialism and for all those who feel the notion of duty and conscience to be troublesome. The incredulity of our age has prepared the way for this new creed. May all Christian peoples, by a sincere return to the Catholic faith, escape the danger of this new and formidable invasion!”

5. This explanation of the spirit-phenomena of the present day is based entirely on the assumption that angels and demons are beings distinct from the souls of men, and that the latter are the product of a special creation, inferior, even to the demons, in intelligence, knowledge, and faculties of

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all kinds; and it attributes, to the exclusive intervention of the “fallen angels,” all the manifestations, both ancient and modern, that spiritists attribute to the souls of the dead.

The possibility for the souls of the departed of entering into communication with the living is a question of fact, and one that is to be decided by observation and experience. Having fully treated of this question elsewhere, we shall not discuss it in this place.⁴⁹ But admitting, for argument’s sake, the assumption that constitutes the basis of the argument just quoted, let us see whether it does not destroy itself with its own weapons.

6. Of the three categories of angels, according to the Church, one occupies itself exclusively with Heaven; to another is confided the government of the universe; the third takes charge of the Earth, and in its ranks are found the guardian-angels appointed to the protection of each human being. A portion, only, of the angels of this category took part in the revolt and was changed into demons. If God has granted permission to the latter to urge men on to their perdition by suggestions of all kinds and the facts of spirit-manifestation, why, since He is supremely just and good, should He have accorded to these tempters the immense power they possess and a freedom of action of which they make so pernicious a misuse, without also granting permission to the good angels to act as a counterpoise to the evil ones, by means of manifestations of the same kind, directed towards a good end? Admitting that God had given an equal amount of power to the good angels and to the bad ones – which, of itself, would constitute an enormous favor to the latter – man would, at least, have been free to choose between them; but, to give to the bad angels the monopoly of temptation, with the faculty of stimulating goodness so perfectly as to deceive the most wary, in order the more surely to seduce those whom they seek to influence, would be to lay a snare for his weakness, inexperience, and trustfulness; in addition, it would be to betray his confidence in God. Reason refutes to admit, on the part of the Divine Being, such a partiality towards evil. Let us look into the facts of the case.

7. The Church attributes to demons the possession of transcendent faculties; “they have lost nothing of their angelic nature;” they possess the knowledge, perspicacity, foresight, clear vision of the angels, and, moreover, keenness, cleverness, and cunning in the highest degree. Their aim is to turn men from goodness, and especially to draw them away from God and to draw them down into Hell, of which they are the purveyors and recruiters.

We can understand that the demons should address themselves to those who are pursuing the upward path and who will be lost to them if they continue to follow it; we can understand that the demons should address themselves to such, and that they should employ every imaginable seduction and even the false gloze of goodness to draw them into their nets; but what we cannot understand is that these invisible agents should address themselves to those who are already given up, body and soul, to evil, and should urge them to return to God and to goodness. Can any human beings be more completely and thoroughly within the grip of the Devil’s claw than those who deny and blaspheme God, and who have plunged, headlong, into all the vices and disorders of unbridled passions? Are not such already on the high road to Hell? Is it comprehensible that the demons, when sure of their prey, should incite the latter to pray to God, to submit themselves to His will, to renounce evil; that they should hold up before them the delights that await the virtuous in the other life, and should horrify them with frightful pictures of the miseries that await the wicked? Who ever saw a tradesman praising up the wares of his rival to the disparagement of his own and urging his customers to go to that rival’s shop? Who ever heard a recruiting-sergeant descanting on the hardships of a soldier’s life and the charms of domestic happiness, telling the recruits that, if they enlist, they will have a life of fatigue and privation, and that, ten chances to one they will be killed, or have a leg or an arm shot away in their first battle?

⁴⁹ Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*,” Introduction, III. IV. V. VI, and Prolegomena; “*The Mediums’ Book*,” Part First, Chap I. 5 and 6. Part Second, Chap I. *Action of Spirits on Matter*. – Tr.

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Such, however, is the stupid part which our adversaries make the demons play, by attributing to their intervention the spirit-manifestations of our time, for it is a well-known fact that, every day, through the instructions emanating from the invisible world, skeptics and atheists are brought back to belief in God, those who never prayed before are seen to pray with fervor, and the most vicious are induced to work ardently for their own moral improvement. To say that all this is a piece of cunning on the part of the devil is to make him out to be a parcel of *ninnies*. And as the cases we instance are not suppositions but facts, and as no denial can undo the reality of a fact, we are compelled to conclude, either that the demons are the stupidest of bunglers – in which case they are neither so cunning nor so clever as they are said to be, and, consequently, not so much to be feared as is pretended, seeing that they are working against their own interests – or else that all the manifestations alluded to are not of their producing.

8. “They cause every form of error to be accepted; it is to obtain this result that wood, stone, forests and fountains, the sanctuary of idols, the legs of tables, *the hands of children*, deliver oracles.” But, if this were so, what weight can be attached to these words of the prophet Joel, quoted in the Acts of the Apostles, ch. II. 17 and 18: – “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your young men shall have visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my spirit on my servants and on my hand-maidens; and they shall prophesy.” Are not these words the prediction of the bestowal of the gift of medianimity upon all, even upon children, a prediction that is being fulfilled at the present time? Did the Apostles hurl an anathema against this faculty? No, they announced its generalization as a favor from God, and not as the work of the Devil. Do the theologians of our day know less of this matter than was known by the Apostles? Should they not recognize the finger of God in the accomplishment of this prediction?

9. “By means of these operations of modern magic, we witness the reproduction among ourselves of the evocations, oracles, consultations, *cures*, and other prodigies that formerly gave renown to the temples of idols and the dens of sybils.” What operations of magic are to be found in spiritist evocations? There was a time when certain magical formulae, signs, and modes of proceeding were supposed to possess special efficacy in evoking spirits, but these are now regarded as ridiculous; nobody believes in their efficacy, and Spiritism condemns them. At the period during which magic flourished, the world had but a very imperfect idea of the nature of spirits, who were regarded as beings endowed with superhuman power; they were never evoked excepting by some who wished to obtain from them, were it even at the price of his soul, the favors of fortune, the discovery of hidden treasures, the foreknowledge of future events, or philters. Magic was supposed to furnish, through its cabalistic signs, formulae, and operations, the means of working prodigies by constraining spirits to put themselves under the orders of men and to satisfy their desires. At the present day, we know that spirits are nothing but the souls of men; and they are evoked by us only for the sake of obtaining counsel from them, if they are good, of moralizing them, if they are ignorant or vicious, and of continuing our relationship with the souls of those whom we have loved in the earthly life. The following quotations leave no doubt as to the teachings of Spiritism in regard to evocation and the communication between men and spirits.

10. It is not possible to compel a spirit to present himself against his will, if he be your superior, or even your equal, in *morality*, because you have no authority over such a one; but, if he be your inferior in morality you can constrain him, *provided your evocation is intended to promote his welfare*, for, in that case, your action will be seconded by other spirits. (“*The Mediums’ Book*,” Part II, chap. XXV, No. 10)

– The most essential of all states of feeling, when you wish to communicate with spirits of higher degree, is seriousness and concentration of purpose. Faith in God and the aspiration after goodness are the most powerful of all evocations as regards superior spirits. By raising the soul towards the higher spheres, through a few moments of serious thought, before evoking, you identify

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yourselves with spirits of correspondingly higher degrees, and thus dispose them to come to you. (Idem, No. 12)

- No talisman has the property of attracting or repelling spirits, for matter has no influence over them. Be sure that no good spirit ever inculcated any such absurdity, and that the virtue of talismans has never existed, except in the imagination of the credulous. (Idem, No. 17)

- There is no special formula for the evocation of spirits; and whoever should pretend to give such a formula may be safely taxed with charlatanism, for *forms* are nothing to spirits. But we hold, nevertheless, that evocations should always be made with seriousness and in the name of God. (Idem, chap. XVII)

- Spirits who make appointments in lugubrious places and at unseasonable hours amuse themselves at the expense of those who listen to them. It is always useless, and often dangerous, to conform to such suggestions; useless, because you gain absolutely nothing by so doing, except being hoaxed; dangerous, not from any harm the spirits may do you, but from the effect they may have upon your own weak brains. (Idem, No. 18)

- No days or hours are more propitious than others for evocations. No physical conditions are of any importance to spirits; to believe in the influence of days and hours is mere superstition. The most propitious time is that in which the thought of the evoker is least preoccupied with his daily affairs, and in which he enjoys the greatest calmness of mind and of body. (Idem. No. 19)

- Malevolence has taken pleasure in representing the modern communication of men with spirits as being surrounded with the ridiculous and superstitious practices of magic and necromancy. If those who speak thus of Spiritism without understanding it had given themselves the trouble to study the subject before talking about it, they might have spared themselves their outlay of imagination and of allegations which prove only their ignorance or ill-will. For the edification of those who are unacquainted with the subject, we declare that, for communicating with spirits, no days, hours, or places are specially favorable; that, for evoking them, no special formulae, no cabalistic or consecrated signs, no initiation or preparation, are needed; that the employment of any outward sign or material object is powerless to attract or to drive them away, and that, for evoking them, the action of our thought suffices; and, finally, that mediums receive the verbal communications of spirits without quitting their normal state, and as simply and naturally as though they were dictated by a living person. Charlatanism alone could affect, in regard to these communications, to assume airs of eccentricity or to accompany their reception with nonsensical accessories. (“*What is Spiritism?*” Chap. II, No. 49)

- As a general rule, the future is hidden from men; it is only in rare and exceptional cases that God allows it to be foretold. If men knew what the future is destined to bring forth, they would neglect the present, and, moreover, would not act with the same freedom because they would be influenced by the idea that, if a thing is fated to happen, there is no need for them to take any trouble about it, or they would seek to prevent its happening. God has willed that this should not be the case, in order that each may concur in the working out of His designs, even of those that they would have opposed if they had known of them beforehand. God permits the revelation of the future when this foreknowledge will facilitate the accomplishment of a given event instead of hindering it, by leading those, who are to bring it about, to act in some other way than that in which they would otherwise have acted. (“*The Spirits’ Book*,” Parts I, III, chap. X)

- Spirits cannot guide us, ostensibly, in the work of scientific research and discovery. The ascertainment of scientific truth is the work of genius; knowledge can only be obtained through labor and effort, for it is through work alone that man advances on his way. Where would be his merit if he had only to interrogate spirits in order to arrive at the possession of knowledge? Every fool, in that case, might become a man of science at small cost to himself. It is the same with regard to industrial discoveries and inventions.

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When the time for a discovery has come, the spirits charged with the direction of human progress seek out a man capable of seconding their action, and suggest to his mind the necessary ideas for bringing that discovery to light, but in such a way as to leave to him all the merit of the achievement; for it is he who must elaborate, and bring to bear, the ideas thus suggested. All the great achievements of the human intelligence have been suggested in this way. But spirits leave each man in his own sphere. They do not impart divine secrets to one who is only fit to till the ground; but they draw out of obscurity the man who is capable of seconding the divine designs. You should not allow yourselves to be tempted, by curiosity or ambition, into inquiries that are *foreign to the purpose of Spiritism*, and that can only lead to mystifications and disappointments. (*"The Mediums' Book,"* Part II, chap. XXVI)

– Spirits cannot enable us to discover hidden treasures. Spirits of high degree take no interest in such matters; but mocking spirits often pretend to indicate treasures which do not exist, or which are in some other place than that in which they cause you to see them. Such deceptions, however, are sometimes useful, by showing you that the true source of fortune is work. If Providence designs a hidden treasure to be found by someone, it will be found by him in what will appear to him as a natural way; otherwise, it will not be found at all. (Idem, chap. XXVI, No. 30)

– Spiritism, by enlightening us in regard to the properties of the fluids that are the agents and means of action of the invisible world, gives us the key to a host of things hitherto unexplained, and that are inexplicable by any other theory; things which in the olden times have passed for prodigies. Spiritism like magnetism reveals to us a law, the effects of which of not wholly unknown, have been hitherto imperfectly understood; a law of which, while its effects were known, the world was ignorant, and the ignorance of which endangered superstition. This law being known, the marvelous disappears; and phenomena, formerly regarded as miraculous or supernatural, are brought into the category of natural things. Spiritists no more perform miracles by making a table to rap, or the so-called dead to write, than does a physician when he restores a sick man to health, or the electrician, when he produces artificial lightning. Whoever should pretend to *perform miracles* by the aid of Spiritism would prove himself an ignoramus or a charlatan by the mere fact of such a pretension. (Idem, Part I, chap. II, No. 15)

– Among the many who have formed a very false idea of evocations, there are some who fancy that they consist in bringing back the dead, with all the lugubrious accessories of the grave! But it is only in romances, in fantastic ghost stories, and upon the stage, that the skeletons of the dead are seen coming out of their sepulchers, draped in their winding-sheets, and rattling their fleshless bones. Spiritism, which has never worked miracles, has never brought a dead body to life; when the body is once placed in the grave, there it definitively remains; but the spiritual being, fluidic and intelligent, was not buried with its gross outer envelope; he separated from that envelope at the moment of death, and when once that separation has been effected, he has no further connection with it. (*"What is Spiritism?"* Chap. II, No. 48)

11. We have multiplied our quotations in order to show that the principles of Spiritism have nothing in common with those of magic. In Spiritism, there are no spirits at the orders of men, no means of constraining them to come to us, no cabalistic signs or formulae, no discoveries of treasures or of means of enriching ourselves, no miracles or prodigies, no divination or fantastic apparitions, nothing, in short, of what constitutes the essential elements and aim of magic. Spiritism not only keeps clear of all these things, but it shows them to be both inefficacious and impossible. There is, then, no analogy whatever between the methods and aim of magic and those of Spiritism; to represent them as similar can only be attempted from ignorance or malevolence; and as there is nothing secret about the principles of Spiritism, which are formulated in terms that are perfectly clear and unambiguous, such misrepresentations can only be short-lived.

As to the cures affected by spirit aid, and acknowledged to be real in the *Pastoral* that we have been examining, they are ill chosen as evidence of the evils resulting from communication with spirits!

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The restoration of health is perhaps, of all the blessings of life, the one which touches us all most nearly, the one which each of us is best able to appreciate at its true value; and very very few would be disposed to renounce such a benefit (especially if obtained after all other means of cure have been employed without success), from the fear of being cured by the devil; in fact, most people would rather be inclined to say that, if the devil has cured them, he has done a good deed!⁵⁰

12. "What," asks the author of the *Pastoral* in a question, "are the secret agents of these phenomena and the real actors in these inexplicable scenes? The angels would not play a part so unworthy, nor lend themselves to the caprices of a vain curiosity."

The author here alludes to the physical manifestations of spirits; among these, there are undoubtedly many that would be but little worthy of spirits of high degree; and if, instead of the word *angels*, we substitute the term *pure spirits*, or *superior spirits*, his assertion is exactly identical with the statements of Spiritism in regard to this point. But it is impossible to place such manifestations on the same level with intelligent communications, made by writing, speaking, or hearing mediums, and which are no more unworthy of good spirits than of eminent men, apparitions, cures, and a host of other manifestations of spirit-power precisely analogous to those which are met with in profusion in Holy Writ, and asserted, therein, to be due to the intervention of "angels" or of "saints." And if "angels" and "saints" have produced in former times phenomena of this character, why should they not produce similar phenomena at the present day? Why should certain facts, occurring at the present day and through the intermediary of certain persons, be set down as being the work of the Devil, when the same facts occurring through the intermediary of other persons are cried up as holy miracles? To sustain such a thesis is to bid defiance to all the rules of logical reasoning.

The author of the *Pastoral* makes a great mistake on qualifying the phenomena in question as "inexplicable;" at the present day they are, on the contrary, perfectly explicable, and it is for this very reason that they have ceased to be regarded as miraculous or supernatural; but even if they were still unexplained, it would be no more reasonable to attribute them to the devil, than it formerly was to do him the honor of attributing to him all the natural phenomena of which science had not yet discovered the cause.

By an "unworthy part" must be understood any absurd or mischievous action on the part of spirits; but such action cannot be attributed to spirits who do good and who bring men back to God and to virtue. Spiritism declares expressly that no low or unworthy action can be attributed to spirits of high degree, the following statements prove as:

13. The quality of spirits is known from their language; that of spirits who are really good and of superior degree is always dignified, noble, logical, free from contradictions; it breathes wisdom, benevolence, modesty, and the purest morality; it is concise and without verbiage. Among inferior, ignorant, and pretentious spirits, the dearth of ideas is almost always accompanied by a superabundance of words. Every false statement, every maxim at variance with true morality, every piece of unwise advice, every gross, trivial, or merely frivolous expression, and, finally, every trace of malevolence, presumption, or arrogance, are incontestable signs of inferiority on the part of the communicating spirit.

Spirits of high degree confine their action to the giving of intelligent communications with a view to our instruction; physical manifestations are more especially the work of spirits of lower degree, commonly designated as *rapping spirits*; just as, among ourselves, feats of muscular strength and agility are performed by tumblers rather than by scientific men. *It would be absurd to suppose that spirits of high degree of elevation would spend their time in performance of that kind. (What is Spiritism? Chap. II, Nos. 37, 38, 39, 40, 60. "The Spirits' Book," Book Second, Chap. I, Different*

⁵⁰ By the endeavor to persuade those who have been cured by spirits that they have been cured by the Devil, a great many persons, who had previously no intention of leaving the Church, have been led to withdraw entirely from it.

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Orders of Spirits; Spirit Hierarchy. “*The Mediums’ Book*,” Part Second, Chap. XXXIV; Identity of Spirits; Distinguishing between Good and Evil Spirits)

What fair-minded man could see in these statements anything like the attributing of an “unworthy part,” to spirits of elevated degree? Spiritism not only does not confound the various ranks of spirit-elevation, but, moreover – while the Church attributes to demons a degree of intelligence equal to that of the angels – it has ascertained from the observation of facts, that the lower orders of spirits are stupid and ignorant, that their moral horizon is narrow, their perspicacity slight, their idea of the economy of things false and incomplete, so that they are incapable of solving certain problems; and that they are consequently unable to perform the marvels with which demons are credited by the Church and by common belief.

14. “The souls of the dead, whom God has forbidden us to consult, are in the realm of sojourn assigned to them by His justice, and cannot *without His permission* place themselves at the order of the living.”

Spiritism fully admits that they cannot come without the permission of God; but it goes still further, for – while the Church attributes to the demons the power of doing without that permission – it asserts that *no spirit*, whether good or bad, can come without having received it, and that, even when spirits are thus permitted to respond to the call of the living, *it is not “to place themselves at their orders.”*

When a spirit is evoked, does he come voluntarily, or is he constrained to do so? *He obeys the will of God*, that is to say, the general laws that govern the universe; he judges whether it is useful to come, and, in so doing, exercises his free will. A superior spirit always comes when he is called for a useful purpose; he only refuses to answer those who evoke him as an amusement. (“*The Mediums’ Book*,” Part Second, chap. XXV)

Can a spirit refuse to come when evoked? Certainly he can; where would be his freewill if he could not? Do you suppose that all the beings of the universe are at your orders? Would you consider yourself bound to reply to everyone who should pronounce your name? When I say that a spirit can refuse to come, I mean, *at the demand of the evoker*; for an inferior spirit may be constrained by a superior spirit to present himself. (Idem, No. 9)

Spiritists are so fully convinced that they have no direct power over spirits and can obtain nothing from them without the divine permission, that, when they desire to make a general evocation, they do so in some such terms as the following: – “*I pray Almighty God to permit a good spirit to communicate with me by writing (or otherwise, as the case may be), and I also beg my Guardian-Angel to assist me, and to keep away evil or troublesome spirits;*” or, if they wished to evoke a given spirit, fixed on beforehand, they employ some such words as these: – “*In the name of Almighty God, I beg the spirit of So-and-so to communicate with me;*” or, “*I pray Almighty God to permit the Spirit of So-and-so to communicate with me.*” (Idem, Part Second, chap. XVII. 203)

15. The accusations hurled by the Church against the practice of evocation do not touch Spiritism, since they are mainly directed against the operations of magic, with which spiritist evocations have nothing in common. Spiritism is in accordance with the Church in condemning those operations and whatever would seem to imply the attributing to superior spirits of a part unworthy of them; and it declares, moreover, that nothing is to be asked, or can be obtained, without the permission of God.

Undoubtedly, there may be those who misuse evocation, who make an amusement of it, who turn it from its Providential aim to serve their own personal ends, and who, through ignorance, frivolity, vanity, or cupidity, depart from the true principles of spiritist doctrine; but true Spiritism disowns them, just as true religion disowns the excesses of bigots and fanatics. It is therefore neither fair nor reasonable to impute to Spiritism the abuses that it condemns, or the misdeeds of those who do not rightly understand its teachings. Before bringing forward an accusation, the accusers should be quite sure that their accusation is just. The blame of the Church is directed against charlatanism,

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mercenary medianimity, and the practices of magic and sorcery; and in this the church is in the right. When criticism, whether religious or skeptical, condemns abuses and stigmatizes charlatanism, it renders a service to the doctrine that it helps rid of its scoria; by so doing it aids us in the fulfillment of our task. But criticism ceases to be legitimate when it confounds the good with the bad, the thing itself with the improper use that may be made of it, as is done by some from ignorance of the subject criticized, by others, from dishonesty; but this distinction, though the critic may ignore it, is made, in the long run, by the public. Nevertheless, this criticism, to which every sincere spiritist associates, if applied to evil cannot harm the doctrine.

16. “The mysterious beings who thus respond to the first call of *the heretical and the impious as readily as to that of the faithful*, of the criminal as of the innocent, are neither envoys of God nor apostles of truth and salvation, but are the tools of error and of Hell.”

Thus, according to the Church, God does not permit good spirits to approach the heretical, the impious, and the criminal, to win them back from their error and to save them from everlasting perdition! He only sends to them “the tools of Hell,” to drag them down and yet more deeply into the mire of damnation! Furthermore, He sends only the most degraded and malicious of beings to the innocent, to pervert them! But are there, then, among the “Angels,” those privileged favorites of the Creator, none who are compassionate enough to come to the assistance of the souls thus being drawn to perdition? What is the use of the brilliant qualities with which they are endowed, if those qualities serve only to secure their own personal enjoyment? Can they really be as good as they are declared to be, if, plunged in the delights of contemplation they see all these souls on the road to Hell without hastening to lead them into the road to salvation? Are they not, rather, like the wealthy egotist, who, possessing all the elements of physical comfort in profusion, leaves the beggar to die of starvation, unpitied, at his door? And is not such a doctrine the exaltation of selfishness into a virtue, and a placing of it, as such, at the very feet of the Eternal?

You are astonished that good spirits should come to seek out the “heretical” and the “impious;” but, if so, you must have forgotten the saying of Christ: – “It is not they who are whole that need the physician, but they who are sick.” Your point of view, then, is no higher than that of the Pharisees of his day? And you, yourselves, if your ministrations were solicited by a repentant criminal, would you refuse to aid him in returning into the path of virtue?

Good spirits only do what is done by the ministers of religion and by all good men, who go to the victims of impiety to move them with the eloquence of truth and kindness. Instead of anathematizing the communications from beyond the grave, you should gratefully recognize the channels thus opened by the Providence of the Almighty and should admire this new evidence of His infinite power and His inexhaustible goodness!

17. The Church admits the existence of Guardian Angels; but, when these angelic guardians are unable to influence their human wards through the mysterious voice of conscience or of inspiration, why should they not make use of means of action more direct and more physically capable of striking the senses, since such means exist? Is it credible that God restricts the employment of these means, which are His work, – since everything is of Him and nothing can happen without His permission, – exclusively to evil spirits, refusing to allow good spirits to employ them also? If such were the case, we should be forced to conclude that God gives greater facilities to the demons for compassing the perdition of men, than He gives to their Guardian-Angels for securing their salvation!

And, strange to say! What the Guardian-Angels of mankind, according to the Church are unable to do, the “demons” do for them; for, with the aid of these communications, denounced by the Church as infernal, they bring back to the worship of God those who denied Him, to the practice of virtue those who were plunged in vice; and they thus present to us the amazing spectacle of millions of men who have been led to believe in God through the power of the Devil, when the Church had proved itself powerless to effect their conversion! How many, as already remarked, who formerly never prayed now pray with faith and fervor, thanks to the teachings of these same “demons!” How many,

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who were formerly proud, selfish, dissolute, have thus been rendered humble, charitable, and less sensual! And we are to be told that this is the work of demons! If this were so, it would have to be admitted that the Devil had rendered them a much greater service, and had given them much more effectual help than the Angels. But those who can imagine that such an idea could be blindly accepted, at the present day, must have a poor opinion of the judgment of mankind in this century. *A religion that makes such a doctrine its cornerstone, which declares its foundations to be undermined if it is deprived of its demons, its Hell, its eternal punishment, and its pitiless God, is a religion that is committing suicide.*

18. "But, since God has sent His Christ to save mankind," it is asked, "has He not proved His love for them, and has He left them without protection?" Undoubtedly, Christ is the Divine Messiah, sent to teach the truth to men and to show them their true path; but, to speak only of the period that has elapsed since his day, count up the number of those who have died and of those who will die in the future without knowing anything of those teachings; and even of those who have heard his message, how many are there who put in practice his precepts? Why should not God, in His solicitude for the well-being of His children, send to them other messengers coming upon the Earth, entering the humblest abodes, going among the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the skeptical and the believer, to teach the truth to those who know it not, to explain it to those who do not understand it, to make up by their *direct* and *multiple* teaching for the insufficiency of the propagation of the Gospel, and thereby to hasten the coming of the kingdom of heaven? And when these messengers are arriving among us in innumerable masses, opening the eyes of the blind, converting the irreligious, healing the sick, and consoling the afflicted, after the example of Jesus, you repulse them, you repudiate the good they are doing, and you say they are demons! Such was also the language of the Pharisees in regard to Jesus, for they too said that he did good through the power of the devil. But what did Jesus reply to their denunciations? "Judge the tree by its fruit; a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

But, in the estimation of the Pharisees of his day, the fruit produced by Jesus was bad, because he came to destroy abuses and to proclaim the principle of human freedom that was destined to put an end to their authority; had he come to flatter their pride, to sanction their prevarications and to sustain their power, he would have been accepted by them as the Messiah so long waited for by the Jews. He was alone, poor, and defenseless; they killed him and thought they had also killed his message; but his message was divine and has survived him. Nevertheless, that message has been propagated but slowly; after the lapse of eighteen centuries it has become known to scarcely a tenth part of the human family and numerous schisms have broken out among those who call themselves his disciples. It is in this state of things that God, in His mercy, sends spirits to confirm and to complete the message brought by Jesus, to bring it within reach of all, and to spread it abroad over the whole Earth. But the message thus repeated is not incarnated in one single man, whose voice would have reached but to a comparatively short distance; the messengers now being sent to the Earth are innumerable, they go everywhere, and no one can seize them; for which reason their teaching is spreading with the rapidity of lightning; they address themselves to the heart and to the reason, and they are therefore understood by the humblest minds.

19. "But is it not unworthy of celestial messengers," some will say, "to transmit their teachings, by means of a vehicle so common-place as 'talking tables?'" Is it not an outrage to their dignity to suppose that they would occupy themselves with trivialities, and that they would leave their brilliant dwelling place to themselves at the disposal of the first person that comes in their way?

Did not Jesus leave the dwelling of his Father to be cradled in a manger? And when has Spiritism ever been known to attribute trivialities to spirits of superior degree? Spiritism asserts, on the contrary, that trivialities can only be the product of trivial spirits. But, by their very simplicity, certain spirit-manifestations have exercised a powerful influence over the minds of a certain class; and, moreover, they have served, while proving the existence of the spirit-world, to show that it is altogether different from what it had hitherto been supposed to be. The phenomena produced with the

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aid of tables were only the beginning of the great spiritist-movement of our day; this beginning was simple and small, like all beginnings; but though the shoot is small when it issues from the acorn, the oak, nonetheless, sends out its branches widely in course of time. Who would have thought that from the humble manger of Bethlehem would go forth a voice that should shake the world?

Yes; Christ is the Divine Messiah; his word is truth, and the religion founded on that word will be immovable, provided that those who claim to be Christians *follow* and *practice* its sublime teachings, and do not make of the just and good God revealed to us in those teachings, a God who is unjust, vindictive, and without pity.

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CHAPTER XI

THE PROHIBITION TO EVOKE THE DEAD

1. The Church does not deny the facts of spirit- manifestation; on the contrary, it admits their reality as is shown by the quotations examined in the preceding chapter, but it attributes them entirely to the influence of demons. It has been said that the Gospel forbids our entering into communication with the spirits of the departed, but this is a mistake, for the Gospel says nothing upon the subject. The main argument against it, purporting to be taken from the Bible, is derived from the laws of Moses. We will continue to quote, for the examination of this branch of our subject, the statements of the same *Pastoral* in regard to this prohibition:—

“It is not allowable to enter into relation with them (the spirits), either directly, or through the intermediary of those who invoke and interrogate them. The Mosaic Law punished with death these detestable practices, in use among the Gentiles. ‘Go not to seek the Magicians,’ it is said in the Book of Leviticus, ‘and ask no question of the diviners, lest you should incur uncleanness by addressing yourselves to them.’ (Chap. XIX, 31) – ‘If a man or a woman have a spirit of Python or of divination, let them be punished with death; they shall be stoned, and their blood shall fall on their own heads’ (Chap. XX, 27). And in “Deuteronomy” it is written: “Let there be no one among you who consults diviners, or observes dreams and auguries, or makes use of witchcraft, sorceries, or enchantments, or consults those that have the spirit of Python, or practice divination, or interrogate the dead to learn truth; for the Lord has all these things in abomination, and he will destroy, at your coming, the nations who commit those crimes.” (Chap. XVIII, 10, 11, 12)

2. It is needful, in order to ascertain the real meaning of these words of Moses, to recall the full texts of the passages from which they are taken, abridged on the foregoing quotations.

“Turn yourselves not away from your God, and go not to seek after magicians, lest you should incur uncleanness by addressing yourselves to them. I am the Lord your God.” (“*Leviticus*,” chap. XIX, 31)

“If a man or a woman have a spirit of Python, or a spirit of divination, let them be punished with death; they shall be stoned, and their blood shall fall on their own heads’ (*Idem*, chap. XX, 27)

“When you shall have entered into the land which the Lord your God will give you, take good care not to wish to imitate the abominations of those peoples; and let no one among you pretend *to purify his son or his daughter by making them pass through fire*, or consult diviners, or observe dreams and auguries, or make use of witchcraft, sorceries, or enchantments, or consult those that have the spirit of Python, or busy himself with divination, or interrogate the dead to learn the truth; for the Lord has all these things in abomination, and He will destroy, at your coming, the nations who commit those crimes.” (“*Deuteronomy*,” chap. XVIII, 9, 10, 11, 12)

3. To those who bring forward these articles of that Mosaic law as obligatory, we reply in the first place, that, if this law is to be rigorously observed in regard to this particular point, it must be held to be equally binding in regard to all other points; for why should its provisions be regarded as good in what concerns evocations and bad in what concerns other matters? We must be consistent; and, if the common sense of Christendom has decided that the legislation of Moses, in many of its provisions, is no longer in harmony with the ideas and the habits of mankind, there is no reason for not admitting that it may be the same in regard to the prohibition we are now considering.

We have in the next place to remark that in regard to the prohibition in question, we must take into account the motives that prompted it, motives which had their weight in the days of Moses, but which, assuredly, are without importance at the present day. The Hebrew legislator wished to make his people break with all the customs acquired by them in Egypt, where the habit of evoking was carried to excess, as is shown by these words of Isaiah: – “The spirit of Egypt shall be annihilated in her, and I

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will overthrow her prudence; they shall consult their idols, their diviners, their pythons, and their magicians.” (Chap. XIX, 3)

Moreover, the Israelites were not to contract any alliance with the nations around them; and therefore, as they would have found these customs among the nations on whose territories they were about to enter and with whom they were about to fight, Moses found it necessary, for the carrying out of his plans, to instill into the minds of his people a profound aversion for all the customs which, if adopted by them, would have constituted so many points of contact between them and their neighbors. In order to furnish a plausible basis for this aversion, it was necessary to represent those customs as being condemned by God Himself; hence the assertion, “The Lord has all these things in abomination, and He will destroy, *at your coming*, the nation which commit those crimes.”

4. Moses was all the more justified in inscribing this prohibition among his laws, because the evocations which he forbade were neither prompted by respect or affection for the souls of the departed, nor inspired by any sentiment of piety; they were resorted to simply as a means of divination, and placed on the same footing as the auguries and portents habitually traded in by charlatanism and superstition: an assertion that is justified by the fact that, despite all his efforts, he was unable to root out a habit which had become a matter of traffic, as is shown by the following quotations from the same prophet: –

“And when they say to you, ‘Consult the magicians and the diviners who pronounce their enchantment in whispers,’ reply to them: – ‘Does not each people consult its own God? And do people speak with the dead concerning the affairs of the living?’” (*Isaiah*, chap. VIII, 19)

“It is I who make manifest the falseness of the prodigies of magic; who sent madness upon those who take upon themselves to divine; who overthrow the mind of the sages and convict of foolishness their useless science.” (*Idem*, Chap. XLIV, 25)

“Let them come, the augurs who study the sky, who contemplate the stars, and who calculate the months to draw from them the predictions which they profess to give you concerning the future; let them come now, and let them save you. They have become like straw, the fire has devoured them; they will not be able to deliver their souls from the consuming flames; there will not even remain, from their burning, coals at which one can warm oneself, nor a fire by which one can sit. See what will become of all those things about which you have busied yourselves with so much labor! These *merchants* who have traded with you from your youth up will all flee away from you, some on the one hand, some on the other, without one of them being left to take you out of your troubles.” (*Idem*, Chap. XLVII, 13, 14, 15)

In this chapter, Isaiah addresses the Babylonians, under the allegorical figure of “the virgin daughter of Babylon, daughter of the Chaldeans.” (v. I.) He tells them that the enchanters will not prevent the ruin of their monarchy. In the following chapter, he addresses himself directly to the Israelites.

“Come hither, ye children of a sorceress, race born of an adulterer and a prostitute! Whom have you made a mock of? Against whom have you opened your mouths and lashed out with your sharp tongues? Are you not perfidious children and bastard shoots, you who seek your consolation in your gods under every thick tree, who sacrifice your young children in the torrents under the jutting rocks? You have put your confidence in the stones of the torrents; you have poured out drink-offerings in their honor; you have offered sacrifices to them. After this, shall not my indignation be kindled against you?” (*Idem*, Chap LVII, 3, 4, 5, 6)

These words are clear and explicit; they prove that at the time when they were written evocations were made for purposes of divination, and as a matter of traffic; they were associated with magic and sorcery, and were even accompanied with human sacrifices. Moses was therefore right in forbidding usages of such a character, and in saying that God had them in abomination. Those superstitious practices were perpetuated until the Middle Ages; but, at the present day, human reason has condemned them, and Spiritism has come to show us that the aim of the relations of men with the

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world beyond the grave is exclusively moral, consolatory, and religious. As spiritists neither sacrifice young children nor pour out drink-offerings in honor of heathen gods; as they neither interrogate the stars, nor the dead, nor augurs, to learn the things of the future which God, in His wisdom has hidden from man; as they repudiate all trafficking in the faculty possessed by some of them of communicating with spirits; as they are prompted neither by curiosity, nor by cupidity, but by a sentiment of piety and by the desire to obtain instruction for themselves and to moralize and relieve the souls who are suffering in the other life, the Mosaic prohibition does not in any way apply to them: a fact which would have been apparent to those who invoke this prohibition against them, if they had acquainted themselves more correctly with the views and the action of spiritists, on the one hand, and had given a more careful study to the Mosaic prohibition, on the other. They would have seen that there is no analogy between what took place among the ancient Jews and the principles and practice of Spiritism, furthermore, they would have seen that Spiritism condemns precisely the very things that prompted the Mosaic prohibition; but, blinded by the desire to find an argument against the new ideas, they have not seen how completely their argument misses the mark.

The civil laws of the present day punish all the abuses that Moses aimed at repressing. If Moses pronounced the penalty of death upon the delinquents of his time, it was because rigorous measures were needed for governing the undisciplined people with whom he had to deal, and, consequently, that penalty was lavishly introduced into his code. It should also be remembered that he had no great choice in the means of repression to be employed by him, for in the midst of the desert he had neither prisons nor reformatories, and besides, his people were not of a character that would have been amenable to the threat of merely disciplinary punishment: consequently, it was impossible for him to graduate his punishments as is done at the present day. It is, therefore, a great mistake to insist upon the severity of the chastisement as proving the degree of guilt attributed by the Hebrew lawgiver to the evocation of the dead. Would those who invoke the Mosaic prohibition as condemnatory of spiritist evocation maintain, out of respect for Moses, the application of the penalty of death in all the other cases in which was applied by Moses? Why, for instance, do those who manifest so strong a desire to revive this particular provision of the laws of Moses pass over in silence the beginning of the chapter, which *forbids priests to possess property and to take any share of any inheritance, "because the Lord Himself is their inheritance?"* ("Deuteronomy," Chap. XXVIII, 1, 2)

5. The law of Moses consists of two distinct parts, viz., *the Law of God*, properly so called and applicable to all times and to all peoples; and *the Civil or Disciplinary Law*, adapted to the habits and character of the Hebrew people at the period of its promulgation. The first of these is universal and unchangeable; the other is susceptible of modification, according to the changes which take place in the views and habits of mankind, in the various phases of their development: and it could no more enter into the head of any one to suppose that men could be governed, at the present day, by the same regulations as the Hebrews in the desert, than to suppose that the Capitularies of Charlemagne could be put in practice in the France of the nineteenth century. Who would dream, for instance, of reviving at the present time this article of the Mosaic Law: – "If an ox strikes a man or a woman with its horn and they die of the blow, the ox shall be stoned, and no one shall eat of its flesh; but the master of the ox shall be held guiltless." ("Exodus," Chap. XXI, 28, 29) Yet this enactment, which seems absurd to us, was really well adapted to the circumstances of the case in the time of Moses; for its aim was not to punish the ox while acquitting its master, but to punish the owner by the confiscation of the animal that had caused the accident, and thereby to compel him to exercise more effectual oversight over his beasts in the future. The loss of the ox was the punishment of its master's neglect, a punishment which would be among a pastoral people sufficiently severe to dispense with the need of supplementing it by the infliction of any additional penalty; but it was necessary that this punishment should not become a source of gain to anyone, and therefore it was forbidden to eat the flesh of the ox. Other articles of the law defined the cases in which the owner of an animal was responsible for injuries caused by it.

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There was a reason for every provision of the civil law of Moses, even in its minutest details; but that law, in substance as well as in form, was only adapted to the special circumstances of the time and the people for which it was enacted. Assuredly, if Moses came back to the Earth at the present day and had to frame a code for one of the civilized nations in Europe, he would not give it the same laws that he gave to the Hebrews.

6. To this view of the matter there are persons who urge as an objection that all the laws of Moses were proclaimed in the name of God; those that refer to the common affairs of everyday life, as well as the law given on Mount Sinai. But, if all the enactments of Moses are believed to emanate from a divine source, why are “The Commandments” limited to the Decalogue? If all the laws of Moses are equally binding, why are they not all equally obeyed? Why, for instance, do not the sticklers for the laws of Moses practice circumcision, a rite to which Jesus was submitted and which he did not abolish?⁵¹ Our antagonists forget that all the ancient legislators, in order to render their laws more authoritative, asserted that they had received them from a divinity. More than any other ruler, Moses needed this sort of sanction for his code on account of the peculiarly obstinate character of the Jews; if, in spite of that sanction he found it so difficult to secure their obedience, he would have found it still more difficult, had he promulgated his laws in his own name.

Did not Jesus come to modify the Mosaic Law, and is it not his law that constitutes the code of the Christian? Did he not say, “You know that so and so was said by them of the old times, but I tell you otherwise?” But has he abrogated the law of Sinai? Not at all; on the contrary, he has given that law his sanction, and his own moral law is only the development of that earlier code. But he nowhere speaks of the prohibition to evoke the souls of the dead; yet it is a matter quite too serious to have been omitted in his instructions if he had intended to endorse it, for he has treated explicitly of points of much less importance.

7. To sum up: – the question is, whether the Church puts the Mosaic law above the Evangelical law, in other words, whether the Church is more Jewish than Christian? It is worthy of note that the Jewish religion is the one, of all others, that has made the least opposition to Spiritism, and that the Jews have not invoked, against the lawfulness of entering into communication with the dead, the enactment of Moses on which the Christian sects habitually base their opposition to evocation.

8. Another contradiction has to be pointed out. If Moses forbade the evocation of the spirits of the dead, those spirits must be able to come to us when we evoke them, as otherwise his prohibition would have been superfluous. If they could respond to the call of the living in the time of Moses, they can do so at the present time; and, if those who respond to our evocation are the souls of the dead, it is evident that this response does not emanate exclusively from demons. Besides, Moses makes no mention whatever of the latter.

It is clear, therefore, that the opponents of evocation cannot logically base their opposition on the Law of Moses, and this for two reasons, viz., 1. Because the Mosaic Law is not the law of Christianity, 2. Because it is not adapted to the usages of our epoch. But, even if the Law of Moses were as binding on Christendom as some persons seem to imagine it to be, that law would still be inapplicable to Spiritism.

Moses, it is true, comprises the interrogation of the dead in his prohibition; but only as secondary to and as an accessory of, the practice of sorcery. The very expression “*to interrogate*,” coupled with “diviners” and “augurs,” proves that, among the Hebrews evocations were employed as a means of divination; but spiritists evoke the dead not to obtain from them unlawful revelations, but to receive from them wise counsels and to assist those among them who suffer to obtain relief. Assuredly, if the Hebrews had only employed the power of communicating with spirits for such

⁵¹ The same query may be raised in regard to the “keeping holy” of the seventh day of the week, the stoning of children who are disrespectful to their parents, the administration of “the bitter water,” etc., etc. – TR.

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purposes, Moses, so far from forbidding evocations, would have encouraged them because they would have rendered his people more tractable.

9. If facetious or malevolent critics have thought proper to represent gatherings as assemblies of sorcerers and necromancers, and mediums as fortune-tellers, – if charlatans have sometimes mixed up the name of Spiritism with ridiculous practices which true Spiritism repudiates, – there are plenty of people who are too fully aware of the thoroughly serious and moral character of the latter, and its doctrine, propounded for the whole human race, protests too strongly against abuses of every kind, for such a calumny not to fall eventually on the right shoulders.

10. “Evocation,” it is sometimes said, “is disrespectful towards the dead, whose ashes we ought not to disturb.” Who brings this objection forward? The adversaries of two opposing camps, who unite in their hatred of Spiritism: – the skeptics, *who do not believe in the existence of spirits*; and those who, though admitting that spirits exist, assert that *they cannot come to us*, and that *the devil is the only agent in the production of the manifestations in question*.

When evocation is conducted in a religious frame of mind and with seriousness of purpose, – when spirits are invited to hold communion with us, not for the gratification of curiosity, but from a sentiment of affection and sympathy and a sincere desire to learn, and to become better – it is difficult to see why it should be more disrespectful on our part, towards the spirits whom we thus evoke, to address ourselves to them *after their death*, than it would have been to address ourselves to them *during their life*. But there is yet another reply to this objection, – and one that is perfectly unanswerable – viz., that the spirits come to us freely and not from constraint, that, in innumerable cases they present themselves spontaneously, without being called; that they never fail to testify their satisfaction at being able to communicate with men, or to complain of having been forgotten by those whom they have left behind them upon the Earth, as the case may be. If their quiet were disturbed by our evocation, or if they were displeased by our calling them, they would tell us so, or they would not come at all. Being perfectly free to come or not to come, the fact that they respond to our evocation by coming proves that they come willingly.

11. Our adversaries bring forward yet another objection to the practice of evocation: – “The souls of the dead, they say, are in the realm of sojourn assigned to them by the justice of God,” that is to say, in Hell or in Paradise. According to this view of the matter, those who are in Hell cannot get out of their place of torment, although full liberty is granted to the demons in this respect; and those who are in Paradise – being entirely absorbed in their own beatitude, and being raised too high above mortals to take thought for them – are too happy to care to come back to this valley of tears for the sake of the relatives and friends they have left behind them! Are they like rich people who should turn their eyes away from the sight of the poor, for fear lest the spectacle of their hungry fellow-mortals should spoil their digestion? But, if such were their sentiments, they would hardly be worthy of their happiness, which in such a case would be the reward of selfishness. As for the souls in Purgatory, they are supposed to be occupied with their own sufferings and to have enough to do to look after their own salvation. Therefore, since every one is fully employed, it is only the devil who can answer the call of the evoker, and, as no one else is able to come, it is evident that we run no risk of disturbing the souls of the dead!

12. But we have here to point out another contradiction. If the souls who are in Paradise are unable to leave that fortunate abode to bring help to mortals, why do the rituals of the most considerable churches of Christendom invoke the assistance of the “Saints,” who must be in the enjoyment of a still greater degree of beatitude? Why do those churches prescribe to their members to invoke these “Saints,” in sickness and affliction, and to preserve them from misfortunes and from dangers? Why do those churches declare that the “Saints,” and the Virgin Mary herself, render themselves visible to men and work miracles in their favor? For, to do this, they must necessarily come out of “Heaven,” and come down to Earth. If those who are at the very summit of celestial glory can thus come down among men, why should not those who are less exalted be able to come also?

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13. That the skeptic and the materialist should deny the possibility of spirit-manifestations is perfectly natural, for they disbelieve in the existence of the soul; but what is strange is to see those, whose belief is based on the existence and future destiny of the soul, *setting themselves angrily against the very means of proving that it exists, and doing their utmost to demonstrate that such proof is impossible*. It would seem only natural, on the contrary, that those who are most interested in its existence should joyfully welcome as a boon bestowed by Providence the means of confounding, by positive proof that admits of no gainsaying, especially as the denial of this principle implies the denial of the very foundations of all religion. They incessantly deplore the invasion of the unbelief that is decimating the flock of the faithful; and yet, when the most effectual means are presented of combating that unbelief they repel those means with more obstinacy than do the skeptics themselves! And when the proofs of spirit-action are multiplied, on every hand, so abundantly as to leave no doubt concerning its reality, they have recourse as an unanswerable argument against it, to the Mosaic prohibition of interchange with the dead, and, in order to justify this prohibition, they rake up a provision of the Hebrew legislator which everybody had forgotten, and in which they are determined, “by hook, or by crook,” to find an applicability which does not exist. Moreover, our adversaries are so delighted with this discovery that they fail to perceive the testimony it furnishes to the truth of the Spiritist Doctrine.

14. None of the arguments brought forward against communication with spirits can stand examination; on the other hand, the angry persistence displayed by our adversaries is sufficient evidence of the importance of the subject, for, if only a handful of people were interested in Spiritism, our opponents would hardly give themselves so much trouble about it. To see the crusade undertaken by all the sects against the manifestations in question, one would think *they were afraid of them*, and that the real motive of their onslaught is fear lest spirits, with their clearer knowledge of the other world, should give men too much light in regard to points which the various churches prefer to leave in obscurity, and should inform them too exactly as to the nature of that other world and the conditions which ensure the happiness or the unhappiness of those by whom it is inhabited. Just as people say to a child, “Don’t go into such and such a place; the Bugaboo is there!” so the churches say to people, “Don’t evoke spirits; it is the devil who answers!” But all such efforts are doomed to fail of their object. Even if it were possible to prevent men from evoking spirits, it would be impossible to prevent spirits from presenting themselves spontaneously to men, and bringing the candle out from beneath the bushel under which human prejudice and short-sightedness are striving to hide it.

No true creed has anything to fear from the light; for light only brings out truth into clearer relief, and the superstitious dread of “the devil” will not prevail against truth and reality.

15. To repel communication with the world beyond the grave is to reject the admirable means of instruction that are furnished to each of us by this initiation into the future life and by the examples thus offered to our consideration. And, moreover, as experience has also shown us the good we may accomplish by turning imperfect spirits from the path of evil, and by aiding those who suffer to disengage themselves from the bonds of matter and to advance their self-improvement, to interdict those communications is to deprive the souls who are unhappy in the other life of the assistance which it is in our power to give them. The following extract, from a communication given by a spirit in reference to this point, sums up admirably the effect of evocation when practiced with a charitable aim: —

“Every suffering and sorrowful spirit who comes to you will recount to you the cause of his failure and the evil tendencies to which he succumbed; he will tell you of his hopes, his combats, his terrors; he will confide to you his remorse, his sorrows, and his despair; he will show you God, justly irritated against the wrongdoer and punishing him with all the severity of His justice.”⁵² As you listen to

⁵² That is to say, the punishment of the wrongdoer, while he is subjected to it, *appears to him* to be due “anger” on the part of the Supreme Power; but the essence of the Spiritist doctrine of Providential retribution is that the

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him, you will be moved with compassion for him and with fear for yourselves. But as you follow the outpouring of his experiences, you will behold the God of justice keeping him in view, awaiting the repentance of the sinner, extending His arms to him as soon as he tries to advance towards Him. You will witness the progress of the repentant soul, to which you will have had the happiness and glory of contributing; you will watch his advancement with the solicitude of the surgeon who has dressed, day by day, the wounds of a patient, and with the joy he feels as he witnesses the completion of his cure.” (The Spiritist Society of Bordeaux, 1861)

punishment of wrongdoing is the direct result of that wrongdoing, that, in virtue of a spirit-faculty of which we know as yet but little, the wrongdoer is not only the *cause* but the *instrument* of his suffering, and that we are, unconsciously but nonetheless really, the *makers* of our own “Hell,” as Christ has declared us to be the *makers* of our own “Heaven.” – TR.

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PART SECOND

EXAMPLES

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CHAPTER I

THE PASSAGE

1. Confidence in the reality of a future life does not exclude apprehension in regard to the passage from this present life to the other one. Many persons do not dread death in itself; what they dread is the instant of transition. Do we, or do we not, suffer in the crossing of the boundary? This is the query that disturbs his or her equanimity, and which is all the more worthy of consideration because it refers to something from which no one among us can possibly escape. We may decline to take a journey upon the Earth; but the journey we are contemplating is one that *must* be taken alike by rich and poor, and if it were a painful one, neither rank nor fortune can do away with its painfulness.

2. When we see the peacefulness of some deaths and the terrible convulsions that accompany others, we naturally infer that the sensations attendant on dissolution are not the same in all cases; but who can enlighten us upon this point? Who will describe for us the physiological phenomenon of the separation of the soul and body? Who will recount to us the impressions of that solemn moment? Science and religion are equally silent in reference to this matter.

Why are they silent? Because both are equally ignorant of the laws that govern the relations of spirits and matter; because the one stops short at the threshold of spirit-life, and the other, at the threshold of physical life. Spiritism is the connecting link between the two, and furnishes us with the needed information respecting the transition from one state of being to the other; first, through the more precise ideas it gives concerning the nature of the soul, and second, through the recitals of those who have quitted the earthly life. The knowledge of the fluidic link that unites the soul and the body is the key to this phenomenon, as to many others.

3. That inert matter is insensible is a fact of which we are certain; it is only the soul that perceives the sensations of pleasure and of pain. During life, the desegregation of any portion of its physical envelope is perceived by the soul, which experiences there from an impression more or less painful. It is the soul that suffers, and not the body; the latter is only the instrument of suffering; the soul is the patient. After death, the body, being separated from the soul, may be mutilated with impunity, for it has no feeling; the soul, being isolated from the body, receives no impression from the disorganization of the latter; it has its own perceptions, the source of which is entirely distinct from tangible matter.

The perispirit is the fluidic envelope of the soul, from which it is never separated, either before or after death, and with which it forms, so to say, but a single being, for neither of them can be conceived of without the other. During the earthly life, the perispiritual fluid penetrates every part of the body and constitutes the vehicle by which physical sensations are transmitted to the soul; it is also by means of this intermediary that the soul acts upon the body and directs its movements.

4. The extinction of the organic life causes the separation of the soul from the body by determining the rupture of the fluidic link that unites them together; but this separation never takes place abruptly: the perispiritual fluid is gradually disengaged from all the organs of the body, so that the separation is only absolute and complete when not a single particle of the perispirit remains united to a single molecule of the body. *The pain experienced, by the soul, at the moment of death, is in direct proportion to the number of points of contact existing between the body and the perispirit, and the greater or less amount of difficulty and slowness with which the separation takes place.* We must, therefore, not disguise from ourselves the fact that death may be more or less painful, according to the circumstances that we have now to examine.

5. Let us begin by examining, as our starting-point, the four following cases, which may be regarded as summing up the main varieties of the process of dissolution, between which, however, there are a multitude of gradations:

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1° The disengagement of the perispirit may be completely effected when the organic life ceases; in that case, the soul feels absolutely nothing. 2° The cohesion between the perispirit and the body may be in full force at the moment of death; in that case, a sort of wrenching asunder of the two takes place, producing a painful reaction in the perceptions of the soul. 3° The cohesion between the body and the perispirit may be weak; in which case, their separation is effected easily and without shocks. 4° Numerous points of contact between the body and the perispirit may exist after the cessation of the organic life; in which case the soul will feel the effects of the decomposition of the body until the links between the two are entirely broken.

From these facts it follows that the suffering, which is so often attendant on death, depends on the strength of the adherence between the body and the perispirit; that whatever tends to diminish this adherence, and to hasten the disengagement of the perispirit from the body, renders its passage less painful; and lastly that if the disengagement is effected without difficulty, the soul experiences no disagreeable sensation whatever.

6. In examining the passage from the earthly life to the spirit-life, another point, and one of the greatest importance, has to be noted, viz., the mental confusion which accompanies the separation of the soul from the body. At the moment when this separation is taking place, the soul is seized with a sort of torpor that paralyzes its faculties, and at least to a certain extent, neutralizes its sensations; it is in a state resembling catalepsy, so that it is rarely conscious of the termination of the process of dying. We say *very rarely*, because there is a case in which the soul may preserve its self-consciousness to the very last, as we will presently see. The state of confusion may therefore be considered as the normal condition of the soul at the moment of death; its duration differs in different cases and may vary from a few hours to many years. When this confusion passes off, the soul finds itself in a position of one who is waking out of a deep sleep; its ideas are muddled, vague, and clouded; it sees, so to say, through a fog; but, little by little, its sight becomes clearer, its memory comes back, and it regains the consciousness of itself. But this awakening is very different, according to the character of the individual; with some, it is calm and accompanied with delightful sensations; with others, it is full of terror and anxiety, and is like a hideous nightmare.

7. The moment when the body heaves the last sigh is, consequently, not the most painful, because in general, the soul is then in a state of unconsciousness; the suffering attendant on dying is undergone either before, or after the moment of dissolution. The suffering that precedes death is due to the convulsions that accompany the desegregation of the physical body; that which follows death results from the distress occasioned by the state of confusion. Let us hasten to say, however, that this suffering is not usual. As we have already remarked, the intensity and duration of the suffering that may accompany death is in exact proportion to the affinity which exists between the body and the perispirit; the closer is this affinity, the longer and the more painful will be the spirit's efforts to free himself from the links by which he is held to the body; but there are persons in whose case the cohesion is so slight that the disengagement of the perispirit is effected spontaneously and naturally, and without any conscious effort on the part of the spirit. In such cases, the fleshly body drops away from the spirit as gently and easily as the ripe fruit drops from the tree; and a serene awake follows this peaceful death.

8. The moral state of the soul is the condition that determines the ease, or the difficulty, with which the spirit disengages himself from his terrestrial envelope. The strength of the affinity between the body and the perispirit is in the exact ratio of the spirit's attachment to materiality; it is, consequently, at the maximum in the case of those whose thoughts and interest are concentrated on the earthly life and the enjoyment of material pleasures; it is almost null in the case of those whose soul has identified itself, beforehand, with the spirit-life. The slowness and difficulty of the separation depends entirely on the degree of the soul's purification and dematerialization. It is in the power of each of us to render our passage, from the life of the Earth to that of the spirit-world, more or less easy or difficult, pleasant or painful.

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This point being laid down, both as a theoretic principle and as a result of observation, we have now to examine the influence exercised by the various *kinds* of deaths, on the sensations of the soul at the moment of dissolution.

9. In all cases of natural death, that is to say, of death resulting from the extinction of the vital forces by age or disease, the separation is effected gradually; in the case of those whose soul is dematerialized and whose thoughts are detached from earthly things, the disengagement of the spirit is almost complete before death takes place; the body is still vitalized by the organic life, when the soul has already entered upon the life of the spirit-world, and is only held to the body by a link so slight that it breaks of itself and without effort with the last beat of the heart. A spirit in this situation may have already recovered his mental lucidity, and may therefore be the conscious witness of the extinction of the life of the body from which he rejoices to be freed; for such a one, confusion scarcely exists; death is for him, only a moment of peaceful sleep, from which he issues with an indescribable impression of happiness and hope.

In the case of the worldly-minded and the sensual, of those who have lived with the life of the body rather than with that of the spirit, and for whom the spiritual-life is nothing – not even a reality in his mind – everything in their earthly life has helped to *tighten* the links that bind them to matter; nothing, through all their earthly career, has tended to *relax*, beforehand, the links which have to be severed abruptly when the hour of their departure has come. As death approaches, the soul, in these cases also, effects its disengagement by degrees, but through a series of continuous and painful efforts. The convulsions of the process of dying, under the conditions we are now considering, are the index of the conflict undergone by the spirit, who, at one moment, tries to break the bonds that resist his efforts to get himself free, and, at another moment, clutches at the body of which he would fain regain possession, but from which he is violently torn away, bit by bit, by an irresistible force.

10. A spirit attaches himself all the more strongly to the life of the body, in proportion to his inability to see anything beyond it; he feels that the organic life is escaping him, and he does his utmost to retain it within his grasp. Instead of yielding himself up to the movement that is drawing him away, he resists it with all his might; and, in some instances, the struggle is thus prolonged for days, for weeks, or for months. Undoubtedly, in such cases, the spirit is no longer in possession of his usual lucidity; the confusion attendant on dissolution has begun, for him, long before death actually occurs; but his suffering is nonetheless severe, and the state of vagueness and doubt in which he finds himself, his uncertainty as to what will become of him, add poignancy to his trouble. Death at length takes place, but his misery is not ended. His mental confusion still continues; he feels that he is alive, but he knows not whether he is living with the fleshly life or with spirit-life; and his struggles are prolonged until the last links between his perispirit and his body are completely broken. In such a case, death has put a term to the disease which has killed the body, but it has not arrested the repercussion of the physical effects of the corporeal dissolution in the consciousness of the spirit; so long as any points of contact exist between the body and the perispirit, the spirit *feels*, and suffers from the process of decay that is taking on in the former.

11. Quite different is the position of the spirit of him who has become dematerialized during his earthly life, even in cases in which death is effected by the agency of the most painful maladies. The fluidic links which unite his body with his perispirit, being already weakened, break without any shock; his confidence in the future, which he foresees in thought and sometimes even in reality, causes him to regard death as a deliverance and his sufferings as a trial; hence there results for him a calmness and resignation that soften the severest sufferings. When death has taken place, the links that connected his spirit with his fleshly body being instantly broken, no painful reaction takes place in his consciousness; he feels, on awakening in the spirit-world, free, lively, relieved of a heavy burden, and thoroughly happy in his complete deliverance from physical pain.

12. In cases of violent death, the conditions under which the process of separation is effected are not exactly the same. No partial desegregation of the elements of his personality having already

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commenced the separation of his body and his perispirit, the organic life is suddenly arrested when in full force; in such a case, the disengagement of the perispirit only begins to be effected after death has occurred, and as in other cases, it cannot be effected immediately.⁵³ The spirit unexpectedly seized upon by death, is, as it were, *stunned* by the suddenness of the event; but, as he feels and thinks, he supposes himself to be still living the earthly life, and he retains this illusion until he has come to understand his real position. This intermediate state between the life of the flesh and the life of the spirit-world is one of the most interesting subjects of study that are offered to us, because it presents the curious spectacle of a spirit who mistakes his fluidic body for his fleshly body, and who experiences all the sensations of organic life. It offers an infinite variety of shades, according to the character, the knowledge, and the degree of moral advancement of each spirit. It is of short duration for those whose soul is purified, because in their case, there has already been a commencement of the liberating process, of which death even the most sudden has only hastened the completion; but for others, it may be prolonged for years. This state is very frequent, even in the cases of ordinary death, but for some it presents nothing painful, because of the qualities of the Spirit; but for others, this situation is a terrible one. It is, especially, in the case of those who have committed suicide, that this situation is the most painful. The body adhering to the perispirit by every fiber, all the convulsions of the former is repeated by repercussion in the soul, which thus undergoes the most horrible sufferings.

13. The various states of the spirit at the moment of death may be summed up as follows: The more slowly a spirit's disengagement is effected, the more severely does he suffer; the rapidity with which his disengagement is effected is in proportion to the degree of his moral advancement: for the spirit whose soul is already dematerialized, whose conscience is pure, death is but a momentary sleep, void of suffering, and the awakening from which is unspeakably delightful.

14. In order that men may be induced to labor diligently to effect their own purification, to repress their evil tendencies, and to vanquish their worldly passions, *they must see the advantages that such a line of action will secure to them in the future life*; so that they may be able to identify themselves with that future life, to concentrate their aspirations upon it, and to prefer it to the life of the Earth, they must not only believe in its existence, but must also understand it; they must be able to contemplate it under an aspect that shall be in harmony with their reason and their common sense, and with their highest idea of the greatness, goodness, and justice of God. Of all the philosophic doctrines hitherto presented to the human mind, Spiritism is the one that exercises, in this respect, the most powerful influence, through the immovable faith that it gives to those who really comprehend its scope and teachings.

The enlightened spiritist *does not begin by believing; he believes because he understands*, and he *understands* because the principles of Spiritism approve themselves to his judgment. The future life is a reality that is displayed incessantly before his eyes, and which he sees and touches, so to say, every moment; consequently, no doubt in regard to it can enter his soul. The short span of his present life seems as nothing to him in comparison with the spirit-life of eternity, which he sees to be his veritable life; and he therefore attaches but little importance to the incidents of the road and he meets with resignation the vicissitudes of which he comprehends both the cause and the utility. His soul is raised above the trials and troubles of his earthly existence by the direct relationships that he cultivates with the invisible world around us; the fluidic links that connect him with matter are thus gradually

⁵³ Every occurrence, however sudden it may appear to us, *having been foreseen and provided for by the overrules*, it follows that the duration of the union of the soul and body is determined at the moment of conception, comes to an end, and on the arrival, *and only on the arrival*, of the date appointed for its ending. The rapidity with which, in some, cases of death from what we improperly term "accident," the spirit has announced himself as being completely free of his fleshly body, proves the correctness of this view of the matter. When sudden death is followed by a long persistence of the union between the perispirit and the body, this persistence results from the fact that the time appointed for the cessation of their union has not yet arrived; and the suffering thus entailed on the spirit is at once the predetermined expiation of some crime in his past and a lesson needed for his future advancement. In cases of voluntary suicide, the spirit appears to remain, as a general rule, riveted by his perispirit to his decaying body, until the expiration of the period originally appointed for the duration of their union. — TR.

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weakened, and a partial loosening of those links, effected during the course of his present existence, facilitates his passage from the life of the Earth to the life of the spirit-world. The mental clouding inseparable from the transition, is of brief duration in his case, because as soon as he has crossed the threshold of the spirit-world, he knows where he is; nothing in that world seems foreign to him; he perfectly understands the situation in which he finds himself.

15. Spiritism, assuredly, is not indispensable to the obtaining of this result, and it has no pretension to be the sole agent for securing the well-being of the soul in the other life; but it facilitates the attainment of that well-being through the knowledge it gives us, through the sentiments it inspires, and through the determination which it awakens, in the minds of all who have sincerely accepted its principles, to labor unremittingly for their mental and moral advancement. It also gives, to everyone, the means of facilitating the disengagement of *other spirits* at the moment when they are quitting their terrestrial envelope, and of shortening their subsequent period of confusion, by prayer and evocation. By sincere prayer, *which is a spiritual magnetization*, we assist the spirit who is passing away to obtain a more rapid desegregation of the perispiritual fluid; by evocation, conducted wisely and prudently, and by addressing the spirit in words of kindness and encouragement, we rouse him out of the state of torpor in which he finds himself, and we help him to recover his self-consciousness more quickly; if he is in a state of distress, we urge him to the repentance which alone can shorten his sufferings.

In the examples we are about to adduce, the happiness and unhappiness of spirit-life are illustrated by the narratives of the spirits themselves, who thus initiated us into the various phases of their realm of existence. We have not sought to bring before the reader the personages more or less illustrious of antiquity, whose position may have undergone considerable change since the existence by which they are known to us, and concerning whom it would be impossible to obtain sufficient proofs of identity. We have, on the contrary, selected the experiences of those whose earthly existence was passed amidst the ordinary circumstances of the life of our own day, because it is from these that the greatest sum of instruction can be drawn. The more nearly the terrestrial existence of a spirit was related to our own, through his social position, his employments, his relationships, etc., the more closely does the narration of his experiences in the spirit-world come home to us, and the easier it is for us to obtain a reasonable probability of the identity of the narrator. The positions of common life are those of the greater number, for which reason the experiences of spirits whose earthly existence was passed in those positions are of more general applicability; exceptional positions are less interesting to the greater number, because they go beyond the sphere of their thoughts and habits. We have, therefore, not sought to bring forward illustrious names; if among those whose statements we have selected, some few are well known, the greater number are altogether obscure. To have paraded renowned names would have added nothing to the instructiveness of these recitals, and would probably have roused the ill will of the friends and connections of those who bore them. We address ourselves neither to the inquisitive nor to the lovers of scandal, but to those who sincerely desire light on the subject of the future life towards which we are tending.

We might have multiplied these examples ad infinitum; but, being compelled to restrict their number, we have chosen those that convey the greatest amount of information in regard to the state of the spirit-world, through the position of the spirit himself, or through the explanation he is able to give us. The greater part of them are as yet unpublished; some few of them, only, have been published in the "Revue Spirite;" of these, we have suppressed all details not bearing directly on the aim of the present work, and we have added the complementary explanation that have subsequently been given in regard to them by our spirit-guides.

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CHAPTER II

HAPPY SPIRITS

MR. SANSON

MR. SANSON, one of the earliest members of the Spiritist Society of Paris,⁵⁴ died April 21st, 1862, after a year of intense suffering. Foreseeing his end, he had addressed, to the President of the Society, a letter containing the following passage:

“In view of the possibility of a sudden separation of my soul and body, I repeat the request that I made to you a year ago; viz., that you will evoke my spirit as quickly as you possibly can after my decease, and as often as you may think fit to do so, in order that I, who have been but a somewhat useless member of our Society during my sojourn upon the Earth, may be of some use to it on the other side of the grave, by enabling it to study, phase by phase, through evocation, the various incidents that follow what is commonly called *death*, but which, for us Spiritists, is only transformation, according to the impenetrable designs of God, and always useful for carrying out of those designs.

Besides this authorization and request that you will do me the honor to perform upon me this sort of spiritual autopsy which my slight advancement will perhaps render sterile, in which case your own good sense will decide you to cut short the experiment, I venture to beg of you personally, and also of all my colleagues, to pray the Almighty to permit the good spirits, and especially our Spiritual-President, Saint Louis,⁵⁵ to assist me with their kindly counsels, and to guide me in deciding on the choice and the epoch of my next incarnation; for I am already much exercised in mind about this matter. I tremble lest, overrating my own spiritual powers, I should ask God, too soon and too presumptuously, a corporeal trial above my strength, which, instead of aiding my advancement, would prolong my stay upon this Earth, or in some other one.”

In order to conform to our friend's desire to be evoked as quickly as possible after his decease, we went to his house, with a few members of the Society, and there, in presence of the corpse, held the following conversation with his spirit, an hour before the appointed time for the funeral. In so doing, we had a double end in view; first, to gratify the wish of the deceased and next, to observe, once more, the situation of the soul at a period so near to death; an observation especially interesting in the case of one so eminently intelligent and enlightened, and so deeply imbued by spiritist truths. We desired to ascertain the influence of his belief on the state of his spirit, and to seize his first impressions of the other life. We were not disappointed. Mr. Sanson was able to describe the moment of transition with perfect clearness; he had watched himself die and he had watched his coming to life again in the spirit-world; a circumstance of rare occurrence, due to the elevation already attained by his spirit.

I

In the death-chamber, April 23rd, 1862.

After having evoked the spirit in the usual terms,⁵⁶ the following conversation took place:

1. *Evocation.* – I respond to your call in order to fulfill my promise.

⁵⁴ “*The Society for Psychological Studies*,” founded by Allan Kardec, in 1858, and of which he was President until his death, in 1869. *Vide*, for ample details concerning this organization, *The Mediums' Book*, Part Second, Chap. XXX. – TR.

⁵⁵ King Louis IX, the self-appointed Spiritual-President of *The Parisian Society for Psychological Studies*. *Vide* “*The Mediums' Book*,” Part Second, Chap. IV, footnote, p. 67. – TR.

⁵⁶ See *Part First*, Chap. X. 14. – TR.

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2. Dear Mr. Sanson, it is for us both a duty and a pleasure to evoke you at once after your death, as you wished us to do.

A. I thank God for permitting my spirit to hold communication with you, and I thank you for your kindness. But I feel weak, and *I tremble*.

3. You suffered so much before your departure that I think we may fairly ask how you are. Do you still feel the pains that racked you so terribly? How does your present state compare with the state in which you were two days ago?

A. My state is a very happy one, for I no longer feel anything of my former pains; I am regenerated, *made quite new*, so to say. The transition from the terrestrial life to the spirit-life was, at first, something that I could not understand, and everything seemed incomprehensible to me; for we sometimes remain for several days without recovering our clearness of thought; but, before I died, I prayed that God would give me the power of speaking to those I love, and my prayer was granted.

4. How long was it before you regained clearness of thought?

A. About eight hours. I cannot be sufficiently grateful to the Almighty for granting my prayer.

5. Are you quite sure that you are no longer in our world? And, if so, how do you know it?

A. Oh, most certainly, I am no longer in your world! But I shall always be near you, to protect and sustain you in inculcating the charity and abnegation that were the rule of my life; and I shall help to spread the true faith, the faith of Spiritism, which is destined to rekindle the belief in truth and goodness. I am well and strong; I am, in short, completely transformed. You could not recognize me as the infirm old man whose memory was leaving him, after he had left far behind him all the pleasure and joy of life! I am a denizen of the spirit-world, freed from the bondage of flesh; my country is the illimitable space, and my future is God, whose power and glory radiate through immensity! I wish I could speak with my children that I might urge upon them what they have always been unwilling to believe!

6. What effect does the sight of your body, lying here beside us, produce on your mind?

A. My body, poor, paltry relic, will return to dust; but I shall continue to cherish the welcome remembrance of all those to whose esteem you served as my passport! Poor, decaying form, dwelling-place of my spirit, instrument of my trial through so many weary years of pain, I look upon you, and I thank you, my poor body! for you have purified my spirit, and the suffering, ten times blessed! which you caused me to endure, has aided me to win the place I now occupy, and to earn the privilege of speaking with these friends, without delay!

7. Did you retain your consciousness to the last?

A. Yes, my spirit retained the use of all its faculties. I no longer *saw*, but I *foresaw*. The whole of my earthly life, too, passed before my mind; and my last thought, my last prayer, was that I might be enabled to speak with you as I am now doing, and I asked God that help might be given to you also in this matter, that so the desire of my life might be fulfilled.

8. Were you conscious of the moment when your body drew its last breath? What took place, in your being, at that moment? What sensation did you experience?

A. At the moment of separation, life seems to break down, and the sight of the spirit is extinguished. We seem to be in a great void, in the unknown; and then, carried away, as though by a wonderful current of surprise, we find ourselves in a world where all is joy and grandeur. I had no longer any feeling, all sense of suffering was lost; I no longer understood anything that was going on in me or about me; and yet, at the same time, I was filled with ineffable joy.

9. Do you know... (what I am intending to read at your grave?)

The first words of this question had hardly been uttered, when the spirit replied to it, without leaving me the time to finish it, replying, also, and without the subject having been mentioned, to a discussion that had taken place between the friends who were present, as to the propriety of reading

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what I had written at the grave, where there would probably be persons who might share or not our opinions.

A. Oh yes, my friend, I know all about it, for I saw you yesterday, and I see you again today, to my great satisfaction! Thank you! Thank you! Speak, that those who are about my grave may understand my views, and that you may arrest their attention. Have no hesitation on that score; the presence of the dead imposes respect. Speak, that the skeptical may be led to believe. Good-bye; speak; courage, confidence, and may my children convert to our revered belief!

J. SANSON.

During the ceremony at the grave, he dictated these words:

“Let death have no terrors for you, my friends; it marks the accomplishment of a stage of our journey, if we have lived right, it is an immense happiness, if we have labored worthily and borne our trials patiently. Again I say to you, courage and good-will! Attach only slight value to the things of the Earth; your abnegation will meet its reward. Remember that you *cannot enjoy too many earthly blessings without appropriating to yourselves a portion of the well being of others*, and thus inflicting on yourselves immense moral injury.

“May the Earth be light above me!”

II

(Spiritist Society of Paris, April 25th, 1862; after evoking the spirit of Mr. Sanson in the usual manner)

1. Friends, I am here.

2. We are much pleased with the conversation we had with you on the day of your funeral; and as you permit us to talk with you, we shall be very glad to continue our conversation, that we may obtain all the information you are able to give us.

A. I am quite ready to converse with you and I am happy to see that you think of me.

3. Whatever can help to enlighten us in regard to the nature of the invisible world is of the utmost importance, both to us, and to all; for it is the false idea which men form to themselves of the other life that usually leads them to skepticism. Therefore you must not be astonished at the numerous questions that we shall have to ask you.

A. I shall not be astonished; and I am waiting to know what you wish to ask me.

4. You have described with luminous clearness, the passage from life to death; you have told us that, at the moment when the body breathes its last, life breaks down, and the sight of the spirit is extinguished. Is this moment a painful one? Is it attended with any suffering?

A. Undoubtedly it is, for life is a succession of sufferings, and death is the complement of them all. For that reason we feel a violent wrench, as though the spirit had to make a superhuman effort to free himself from his fleshly envelope; it is this effort that absorbs our whole being and makes us lose the consciousness of what we are becoming.

This is not the case in general. Experience shows us that many spirits lose consciousness before death occurs; and that, with those who have reached a certain degree of dematerialization, the separation takes place without any effort.

5. Do you know whether the moment of death is more painful for some spirits than for others? Is it more painful, for instance, in the case of the materialist, who believes that everything will be ended with the death of his body?

A. Certainly. The spirit who is prepared for death has already forgotten his suffering, or, rather, he is accustomed to it; and the mental quietness with which he sees the approach of death prevents him

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from suffering doubly, as he would otherwise do, because he knows what is awaiting him. Moral suffering is the most painful of all; and its absence, at the moment of death, diminishes immensely the pain of the separation. He who does not believe in a future life is like a prisoner under sentence of death, whose thought beholds both the gibbet and *the unknown*. There is a similitude between this death and that of the atheist.

6. Are there materialists so rooted in their denial of immortality as really to believe, in this solemn moment, that they are about to be plunged into annihilation?

A. There are, undoubtedly, some who believe in annihilation up to their last hour; but, at the moment of the separation, an entire change comes over the spirit's mind. He is tortured by doubt, and anxiously asks himself what is going to become of him; he seeks for something to cling to, and finds nothing. The separation, in such a case, cannot take place without causing this impression.

A spirit gave us, on another occasion, the following description of the end of the unbeliever:

"The confirmed unbeliever experiences, in his last moments, all the anguish of the horrible nightmare in which the sleeper seems to be at the edge of a precipice, on the point of falling into the abyss beneath him. He makes the most agonizing effort to fly from the danger, and he is unable to move; he seeks in vain for something to stay him, some fixed point by which to keep himself out of the terrible void into which he feels himself to be slipping; he tries to call for help and is unable to make any sound. It is under the pressure of this frightful agony that the dying man is seen to writhe in convulsion of the death-throes, wringing his hands, and gasping out stifled and inarticulate cries, all of which are the certain indications of the nightmare from which he is suffering. In ordinary nightmare, your waking relieves you of the despair that was oppressing you, and you rejoice to perceive that you have only been dreaming; but the nightmare of death often lasts for a very long time, even for many years, after the separation has taken place; and the suffering thus caused to the spirit is sometimes rendered still more severe by the thick darkness in which he finds himself."

7. You have told us that, at the moment of death, you no longer saw, but that you foresaw. By this, we understand you to mean that you no longer saw with your bodily eyes, which is perfectly comprehensible; but we should like to know whether, before the life of your body was entirely extinct, you obtained a glimpse of the spirit-world?

A. That was what I meant to say. The instant of death restores to the spirit his normal clairvoyance; the bodily eyes no longer see, but the spirit, whose sight is far more penetrating, immediately discovers around him an unknown world, and this reality, becoming suddenly visible to him, gives him – though only momentarily, it is true – a sense of intense delight, or of inexpressible distress, according to the state of his conscience and the remembrance of his past existence.

The spirit here is alluding to the instant preceding the loss of consciousness, which explains his saying "though *only momentarily*," for the same agreeable or disagreeable impressions are again perceived by the spirit on his awaking in the other life.

8. Be kind enough to tell us what you saw at the moment when your spirit-eyes were opened to the light of the other world. Describe to us, if possible, the aspect of the objects that then presented themselves to your sight.

A. When I came to myself and was able to look about me, I was *dazzled*, and could not understand what I saw, for the mind does not regain clearness instantaneously. But God who gave me a profound proof of His goodness allowed me to recover soon the use of my faculties. I perceived that I was surrounded by a numerous company of friends, among whom were all the spirit-protectors who are in the habit of coming to our *séances*; they were rejoicing in my arrival, and welcomed me with smiles. I felt myself to be in the enjoyment of the plentitude of health and strength, and was able to accompany them, joyously and without effort, through the vast expanse of space around me. But what I saw, in my journey through immensity, cannot be described in human speech.

I shall come to you again, nevertheless, to speak with you more at length of my happiness, within the limits of what it is permissible by God for us to say. Be quite sure of one thing, viz., that

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what you understand by *happiness*, in your world, is a fiction. Live wisely, innocently, in the spirit of charity and of loving-kindness; and you will have prepared for yourselves impressions that your greatest poets would be powerless to describe.

Fairy tales are, undoubtedly, full of absurdities; but may they not be, in some of their details, an imperfect reflex of what goes on in the world of spirits? Does not Mr. Sanson's recital of his experiences resemble the story of the beggar who, having gone to sleep in a poor and dingy hut, finds himself, on awaking, in a splendid palace and surrounded by a brilliant court?

III

9. Under what aspect did the spirit appear to you? Was it under the human form?

A. Yes, my dear friend, our spirit-friends have always told us, upon the Earth, that they retain in the spirit-world the transitory form that they wore in their last earthly life; and this is true. But what a difference between the clumsy human machines, that drags itself along so heavily upon the Earth, with its load of sorrows and trials, and the wondrous fluidity of the spirit-bodies! There is no ugliness among them, for their features have lost the expression of harshness that is characteristic of the human race. God has blessed all those gracious body that move around in perfect elegance. Their beauty may truly be termed *beatific*, and their movements are the perfection of elegance and grace. The language of the spirits has intonations unknown to human speech; and their glance has the depth and brilliance of a star. Try to imagine all the beauty that can be built up by the power of the Supreme Architect, and you will have formed to yourselves some faint idea of the appearance of spirits.

10. How do you appear to yourself? Do you seem to yourself to possess a form that is limited and circumscribed, although fluidic? Do you feel that you have a head, a trunk, arms, and legs?

A. Spirits, having preserved a form that resembles the human, but idealized, divinized, have undoubtedly, all the members of which you speak. I feel myself perfectly in possession of a form and fingers, for we can by our will, render ourselves visible to you, or press your hands. I am close to you, and I have pressed the hand of each one of you, without your being aware of my doing so; our fluidity enables us to be everywhere without occupying any point of space, without causing you any sensation, if such be our desire. At this very moment, your hands are folded, and my hands are in yours. I say to you, "I love you!" yet my body takes up no place, the light passes through it; and what would seem to you to be a miracle, if you could see it, is for spirits the continuous action of every instant.

Spirit-sight has no relation to human sight, just as the spirit-body has no real likeness to the human body, for it is, in general and in details, absolutely different from the latter. The perspicacity of a spirit may be called *divine*, in this sense, viz., that it extends to everything, even to the divining of your thoughts; and his form is so completely under his control that he can, when he chooses to do so, assume the appearance best calculated to recall him to your remembrance; but in point of fact, the advanced spirit, who has finished with the trials of an earthly life, has an affection for the form that can lead him closer to God.

11. Spirits are of no sex; but as, only a few days ago, you were a man, is there in your present state more of the masculine nature than of the feminine? And how is it, in this respect, with spirits who have been separated for a longer time from their earthly body?

A. For us, there is neither "masculine" nor "feminine;" there is no procreation among spirits. Spirits are created by God; since, for the carrying out of His marvelous designs, He has willed that they should incarnate themselves upon the Earth, it was necessary to provide them with the means of effecting the reproduction of fleshly bodies through the agency of males and females. But you can understand, without being necessary to enter into any explanation of the matter, that there can be no sex in spirits.

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It has always been asserted by spirits that they are of no sex, because the sexes are only needed for the reproduction of bodies, and as spirits do not reproduce themselves, sex would be useless to them. Our question was intended, not to draw forth a fresh assertion of this fact, but to ascertain whether, after a death so recent as that of Mr. Sanson, the spirit retained, in this respect, any impression of his terrestrial state. Spirits who have reached a certain degree of purity are perfectly aware of their non-sexual nature; but, among those of lower degree, who are not yet dematerialized, there are many who believe themselves to be still what they were upon the Earth, that have preserved the same passions and the same desires, and imagine themselves to be still men or women; hence it is that some of them have declared that spirits are of one or other sex. The contradictions observable in the statement of spirits are due to the different degrees of advancement at which they have arrived; the error does not come from the Spirits, but from the want of careful examination, on the part of those who question them.

12. How does our present *séance* appear to you? Do we appear to your new perceptions the same as we did when you were among us? Can you see each of us as clearly, as distinctly, as formerly?

A. Much more clearly, for I can read the thoughts of each, and I am delighted with the excellent impression that is caused me by the good intentions of all those who are here assembled. I wish that the same cordial understanding could be arrived at, not only in Paris, by the union of all the spiritist circles, but also throughout the whole of France;⁵⁷ *too many of whose spiritist societies are separated by jealousy, excited by the machinations of quarrelsome spirits who take pleasure in discord and disunion, whereas Spiritism should be synonymous with the complete and absolute forgetfulness of the ME.*

13. You say you read our thoughts; can you explain to us the way in which this perception of thought is effected?

A. It is not easy to do so; to explain to you the prodigious faculty of the spirit-sight, it would be necessary to begin by giving you the knowledge of a whole arsenal of agent unknown to you, and by rendering you as learned as we are, which could not be done, because your faculties are limited by your physical organism. Patience! Try to become *good*, and you will attain this knowledge. As of yet, you have only the amount of knowledge that corresponds to your degree of advancement; in course of time, you will be as we are. Try to die the death of the righteous, that so you may be able to learn much in the other life. Let curiosity – that is the stimulus of the reflective mind – lead you on gently to the passage that will procure for you the satisfaction of all your desires for knowledge, past, present, and future! Meanwhile, let me say by way of replying, as well as I can, to the question you have just addressed to me, that the air by which you are surrounded, impalpable as we are, takes the impress of your thought; every breath you exhale is, so to say, a page on which your thought is written; and all those pages are read, and commented upon, by the spirits who are incessantly about you, messengers of a divine telegraphy which nothing escapes.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

After the first evocation of the spirit of Mr. Sanson, at a *séance* of the Spiritist Society of Paris, another spirit made, spontaneously, under the above heading, the following communication:

“The death of the worthy and intelligent man, with whose spirit you have been conversing, was ‘*the death of the righteous*,’ that is to say, accompanied with calmness and hope. As daylight follows the dawn, so the spirit-life in his case succeeded to the earthly life; and his last sigh was exhaled in a

⁵⁷ At the time of his decease, ALLAN KARDEC was engaged in elaborating the bases of a General Association, having its seat in Paris, and to which all the Spiritist Societies of Paris, of France, and of all other countries, were to be affiliated. – TR.

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hymn of thankfulness and love. How few accomplish, in this fashion, the rough passage to the spirit-world! How few, after the intoxications and the despondencies of life, can thus perceive the harmonious rhythm of the higher spheres! As one who, having been mutilated by a shot, still suffers, after his cure, in the limb he has lost; so the soul of the man who dies without faith and without hope issues, torn and palpitating, from his body, and falls, unconscious, into the abyss of space.

Pray for these souls in trouble; pray for all who suffer. The action of charity is not restricted to those who are visible to the fleshly eye; it aids and consoles those, who also inhabit space. You had a touching proof of this truth in the sudden conversion of the spirit who was so deeply affected by the spiritist prayers offered up at the grave of this excellent man, whom you do well to question, and who desires to aid your advancement.”⁵⁸

MR. JOBARD

Director of the Industrial Museum of Brussels; born in Baissey (Haute Marne), he died, in the city of Brussels, of apoplexy, October 27th, 1861, at the age of sixty-nine.

I

Mr. Jobard was one of the Honorary Presidents of the Spiritist Society of Paris. It had been intended to evoke him at the *séance* of November 8th, when he forestalled this intention by making, spontaneously, the following communication:

“I am here, I whom you were going to evoke, and who desire, first of all, to communicate through this medium, whom I have been trying in vain to induce to write for me until now.

“I wish to tell you of my impression at the moment of the separation of my soul from my body. I felt an indescribable shaking of my whole being; my entire life, my birth, youth, and manhood, came back all at once to my memory, which showed me every incident of my career with wonderful clearness. I was conscious of no other desire than that of finding myself again in the regions revealed to us by our beloved belief; and then all this tumult died away. I was free, and my body was lying lifeless beside me. Ah! Dear friends, what an intoxicating happiness it is, this stripping away of the burden of the earthly body! What an unspeakable joy to take in the view of the glorious immensity around us! But you must not fancy that I found myself all at once at the summit of felicity; no, I am among those who, thought they have learned something, but have yet a great deal more to learn. I was not long in remembering you, *my brothers in exile*; my sympathy, my good wishes, are with you!

⁵⁸ After the ceremony, a few of the members of the Society, having met together, received the following communication, made spontaneously and most unexpectedly: “My name is Bernard; I lived in 1796, in Passy, which was then a small village. I was a poor devil of a teacher; and God alone knows what miseries I had to undergo. What a life of weariness I went through! How many years of care and suffering! I came, at last, to curse God, the devil, men in general, and women in particular! Of the last, not one ever came to me to say, ‘Courage! Patience!’ I was obliged to live alone, always alone; and the malice of others rendered me malicious. Since that time I wander about the places where I lived and died.

“I heard what you said today; I was greatly affected by your prayers; you have accompanied a good and worthy spirit to the grave of his body, and all that you said and did has moved me deeply. I was one of a numerous company of spirits; we all prayed in common for you all, for the spread of your holy belief. Pray for us, who need help. The spirit of Sanson, who was with us, has promised us that you will think of us. I desire to be reincarnated in order that I may profit by a new trial, and thus prepare for myself a happier future in the spirit-world. Adieu, friends; I call you so, because you are kind to those who suffer. As for you, I wish you good thoughts and a happy future.”...

We think it important to call attention to the fact that the writing medium, who served as Mr. Sanson’s intermediary on the day of the funeral and the following days, had never seen Mr. Sanson, and knew nothing of his character, position, or habits; he did not know that he had children, and therefore could not know whether they did, or did not, share his opinions in regard to Spiritism. The correctness of the allusions contained in the various messages, and the faithfulness with which the character of Mr. Sanson is reflected in them, cannot, therefore, be attributed to knowledge, or to imagination, on the part of the medium. Another fact, equally curious and equally independent of the medium’s mind, is the spontaneous communication of the spirit, Bernard, of whom neither the medium nor any of the persons present had ever heard. – Vide “*Revue Spirite*,” May 1862, pp. 132 & 133.

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“Do you care to know who were the spirits that received me on my return to the other life, and what were my first impressions on crossing its threshold? Those friends included all whom we have evoked, all our spirit-brothers who have shared our labors. What I saw was a splendor that cannot be described. I have set myself to discerning what is true in the communications that have been received by us, and I am ready to correct any erroneous statements; ready, in fact, to be the knight-errant of truth in the other world, as I was, when in your world.”

JOBARD

1. During your lifetime, you requested us to call you when you should have quitted the Earth; we therefore do so, not only in order to comply with your wish, but also, and especially, to renew to you the expression of our sincere and lively affection, and in the hope of learning from you; for you, more than any other, will be able to give us precise information respecting the world in which you now are. We shall therefore be very glad if you will have the kindness to reply to our questions.

A. What has now to be done is to assist you to a knowledge of the spirit-life. As for your sympathy, *I see it*; I no longer merely receive the expression of it through the ears, which is a great step in advance.

2. To fix our ideas, so as not to talk vaguely, we begin by asking you in what part of the room you are, and how you would appear to us, if we could see you?

A. I am close to the medium; you would see me under the appearance of the Jobard who has so often been seated at this table, for your mortal eyes, not yet unsealed, can see spirits only under their mortal form.

3. Would it be possible for you to render yourself visible to us, and, if not, what is the obstacle that prevents your doing so?

A. Your own personal condition. A seeing medium would see me; no others could see me.

4. The seat you occupy is that which you used to occupy when you were with us, during your life, and which we had kept for you this evening. Those who have seen you there, then, may imagine you to be with us, just as you were on those occasions. If you are not there with your material body, you are there with your fluidic body, which has the same form; if we do not see you with our bodily eyes, we see you with the eyes of our thought; if we can no longer hold communion with you by word of mouth, we can do so by writing, with the aid of an intermediary; our connection with you is therefore in no way interrupted by your death, and we can converse with you as easily and as completely as before. Is this a true description of the state of the case?

A. Yes; you have known all this for a long time. As for this seat, I shall often occupy it, even when you do not notice it, for my spirit will reside among you.

We invite attention to these last words: “My spirit will reside among you.”

In the present case the statement is not figurative, but expresses a reality. Through the knowledge that is given us by Spiritism of the nature of spirits, we know that a spirit may be among us, not merely in thought, but also *in person*, with the aid of his ethereal body, which makes him a distinct personality. A spirit, then, may reside among us after death, as really as during the life of his body; and, what is more, he can come and go when he pleases. We thus have around us, in our houses, a crowd of invisible inmates, some of whom regard us with indifference, while others are attached to us by affection. It is of these latter, especially, that it may be said, “They reside among us;” a statement that is to be understood as meaning, “They habitually assist, inspire, and protect us.”

5. It is not very long since you were seated in the place you are occupying at present; do the conditions in which you now find yourself seem to you to be changed? What effect does this change produce in you?

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A. The conditions do not seem to me changed; but my spirit enjoys a clearness and distinctness of perception that leaves no shadow about the questions to which I direct my thought.

6. Can you remember whether you had been in the same state before your last existence and do you find yourself changed since then?

A. I remember my anterior existences, and I perceive that I have improved. I see, and I assimilate what I see. After my former incarnations, my spirit was in a state of confusion, and I perceive nothing but my terrestrial gaps.

7. Do you remember your last incarnation but one, that which preceded your existence as Mr. Jobard?

A. In my last existence but one I was a working mechanic, devoured by poverty and by the desire to perfect my work. *I have realized, in my life as Jobard, the dreams of the poverty-stricken workman*, and I praise God, whose infinite goodness has caused the plant, of which He had sown the seed in my brain, to grow and fructify.⁵⁹

8. Have you already given any communications elsewhere?

A. I have, as of yet, given very few communications. In many places, another spirit has taken my name. In some cases I was near this spirit, but was not able to communicate; my death is so recent that I am still affected by certain terrestrial influences. I can only express my thoughts where I find perfect sympathy. Before long, I shall be able to act with entire freedom; but I cannot do so yet. When a man who dies is widely known, he is evoked on all sides; a thousand spirits are prompt to assume his name; this has already happened to me in several instances. I assure you that few spirits are able to communicate directly after their deliverance, even with the aid of their favorite medium.

9. Do you see the spirits who are with us this evening?

A. I see, close to you, *Lazarus and Erastes*; a little farther off, hovering in space, the *Spirit of Truth*; besides these spirits of greater advancement, I see a crowd of spirit-friends who surround the assembly, taking an active and benevolent part in the proceedings. You may esteem yourselves happy, dear Friends, for good influences are about you, warding off the suggestions that would lead you into error.

10. During your life, you shared the opinion of those who suppose the Earth to have been formed by the agglomeration of four planets. Do you still hold this opinion?

A. That opinion is erroneous. The recent discoveries of geology prove the convulsions that have occurred in the history of the Earth and the successive eras of its formation. The Earth, like the other planets, has had its own life; and God had no need of so disorderly a cataclysm as is implied in such an aggregation of planets. Water and fire are the only organic elements of the Earth.

11. You also believed that men might remain for an unlimited period in a state of catalepsy, and that the human race has been brought, in this state, to the Earth. Is this still your opinion?

A. All that was a mere illusion of my imagination, always apt to go too far. The state of catalepsy may last for a long time, but not indefinitely. My idea was derived from the exaggerations of Eastern legends. Believe me, I have already suffered not a little in recalling the illusions to which I was too prompt to attach credence; do not lose sight of this fact. I had already acquired considerable knowledge; and my intelligence being prompt (I may say so without vanity,) to apply the wide and varied researches of my anterior career, I had retained, from my preceding incarnation, the love of the marvelous and the complex acquired in my study of the figments of the popular fancy.

I have not, as of yet, given so much attention to purely intellectual subjects, such as those in which you are interested. How could I do so, dazzled, carried away, as I am, by the wondrous spectacle that I see around me? The tie of our common spiritist belief a tie far more powerful than you, human beings, can imagine, is the only thing that could attract me to this Earth that I abandon – not

⁵⁹ Mr. Jobard, a man of great learning and immense activity of mind, was the author of many ingenious and valuable inventions. – TR.

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with joy, for that would be an irreverence towards the Creator – but with a profound thankfulness for my deliverance.

A subscription having been set on foot, by the Spiritist Society, in February 1862, for the distressed operatives of Lyons, one of the members subscribed 25 francs in his own name, and 25 francs in the name of Mr. Jobard, who dictated, in reference to this incident, the following message:

I am pleased and grateful to find that my spiritist brethren do not forget me. Thanks to the generous heart that has conveyed to you the offering that I should have made, if I had still been a dweller in your world! In the one that I now inhabit, we have no need of money; it was therefore necessary for me to draw upon a friendly purse in order to give you a tangible proof of my sympathy for the misfortune of my brothers in Lyons. Brave workmen! You see that charity is not an empty word, since rich and poor have shown their fraternal sympathy in your distress! You are thus upon the broad, humanitarian road of progress; may God preserve you therein, and may more fortunate times be in store for you; our spirit-friends will sustain you and aid you to triumph over the difficulties of your lot!

I am beginning to live more peacefully, less disturbed by the evocations from every quarter that pursued me, for a time, thick as hail. Spirits are not exempted, it seems, from the tyranny of *fashion*; when the fashion of evoking Jobard shall have been supplanted by some other; I shall pass into the region of human forgetfulness; and I beg that, when this is the case, my sincere and serious friends will continue to evoke me, that we may resume our study of questions which have hitherto been treated of too superficially, and that thus your friend Jobard, completely transfigured, may be enabled to be of use to you, as he desires to be, from the very bottom of his heart.

JOBARD

Having given a sufficient time to communicating with his earthly friends, Mr. Jobard joined the ranks of the spirits who are most actively pushing forward the social renovation of the Earth, while awaiting his approaching reincarnation in this world, when he will take a still more direct part in the work of its reformation. Since that time, he has frequently given to the Paris Society – among whose members he insists upon being still enrolled – communications of superior import, whose seriousness of purpose has not excluded the originality of style, and the witty sallies, by which his writings were characterized during his life, and which reveal the authorship of his messages before he has signed them.

SAMUEL PHILIPPE

Samuel Philippe was an upright man, in the fullest acceptance of the term. He was never known to do a wicked thing or to have willingly injured any human being. His devotion to his friends was unbounded; whoever needed his aid was sure to obtain it, even though at a loss to himself. Trouble, fatigue, sacrifices of all kinds, he willingly underwent for the sake of being useful to others; and he did this naturally, without ostentation, and was astonished that anyone should give him credit for so doing. So far from showing resentment against those who wronged him, he was just as ready to oblige them as though they had only done him good. When people repaid his kindness with ingratitude, he would say, “It is not *I* who am to be pitied, but *they*.” Though extremely intelligent and gifted with much natural talent, his life was laborious and full of heavy trials. He was one of those rare natures that flower in the shade, of whom the world takes no note, and the splendor of whose goodness is not recognized by human eyes. He had derived, from his knowledge of Spiritism, an ardent faith in the future life and great resignation in hearing the ills of the present one. He died in December 1862, at the age of fifty, after a long and painful illness, sincerely regretted by his family and friends. Evoked several months after his death, he responded to our call in the following conversation:

Q. Have you a clear remembrance of your last instants upon the Earth?

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A. Perfectly so, this remembrance came back to me little by little, for, at the moment of my departure, my ideas were confused.

Q. Will you kindly tell us, both for our instruction and for the interest we feel in your exemplary life, how the passage from the earthly life to the spirit-life was effected in your case, and the situation in which you now find yourself?

A. Willingly; this narrative will be useful, not to you only, but also to me. By turning my thoughts back to the Earth, the comparison will cause me to appreciate more correctly the goodness of the Creator.

You know how full of sorrows was my life; – thank God my courage never failed me under adversity, and now I rejoice to have borne my troubles courageously. How much I should have missed had I yielded to discouragement! I shudder to think that, through giving way to weakness, I might have lost the benefit of all that I had endured, and have had to begin the lesson over again. Oh Friends! May you be thoroughly persuaded of this truth; upon it depends your future happiness. No, it is not to pay too much for this happiness with a few years of sufferings. If you could but feel how small a matter are a few short years in comparison with eternity!

If the last of my existences appears to you to have been in some degree meritorious, you would not have said as much of those that preceded it. It is only through continuous struggles with my evil tendencies that I have made myself what I now am. To efface the last traces of my former faults, it was necessary for me to undergo these last trials, which I had voluntarily accepted. The firmness of my resolution gave me the strength to bear them without murmuring. I now bless those trials; through them I have broken with the past, which is now, for me, only a remembrance; and I can contemplate, with legitimate satisfaction, the headway I have already made.

Oh! You who made me suffer when I was upon the Earth, who were harsh and unkind to me, who humiliated me and filled my cup with bitterness, whose treachery often reduced me to the hardest privations, I not only *forgive you, I thank you*, for all you did! You little thought that, intending to do me harm, you were really doing me so much good! It is to you that I owe, in great measure, the happiness I enjoy; for you gave me the opportunity of forgiving and of returning good for evil. The Divine Providence placed you upon my road in order to try my patience and to exercise me in the practice of the most difficult branch of charity – the love of our enemies.

Do not be impatient at this digression; I now come to the questions you have addressed to me.

Although I had suffered horribly during my last illness, I underwent no death-struggle; death came upon me like a sleep, without effort, without any shock. Having no fear of the future, I did not seek to retain my hold upon life, and I had, consequently, no need to struggle against the action of desegregation. The separation took place without effort, without pain, and even without my knowledge.

I am not aware how long this sort of sleep lasted, but it was only for a short time. My waking was a calm that offered a delightful contrast to my previous state; I had no longer felt any pain, and I rejoiced in this deliverance; I wished to get up, and to walk about; but a torpor, that was not at all disagreeable – that was, on the contrary, rather pleasant – held me motionless, and I gave myself up to it with a sort of enjoyment, without trying to understand my situation, however, without doubting that I had left the Earth; everything about me seemed to me like a dream. I saw my wife and several friends on their knees in the room, and weeping; and I said to myself that they, no doubt, thought I was dead. I wished to tell them they were mistaken, but I could not articulate a single word, from which I concluded that I really must have been dreaming. And I was still further confirmed in this idea because I saw myself surrounded by various persons whom I loved, but who had long been dead, and also by others whom I did not recognize at first, and who seemed to be watching over me, and awaiting my awakening.

This state was made up of alterations of lucidity and of somnolence, in which I alternately recovered, and lost, the consciousness of my *self*. Gradually, my ideas acquired more distinctness; the

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light that I had seemed to see, as it were, through a fog, became brighter; I began to recover my consciousness, and I presently comprehended that I no longer belonged to the terrestrial world. If I had not had knowledge of Spiritism, my illusion would doubtless have lasted much longer.

My mortal envelope was not yet buried; I looked upon it with a sort of pitying contempt, congratulating myself on being rid of it. I was so glad to be free! I breathed at ease, like one who has escaped from a foul and stinking atmosphere; an indescribable feeling of happiness pervaded my whole being; the presence of those I had formerly loved filled me with joy; I was not in the least surprised to see them, it appeared to me perfectly natural to do so, but I seemed to have found them again, after a long journey. One thing surprised me much, at first, viz., that we understood one another without pronouncing a word; our thoughts were transmitted in a single glance, and as though by a sort of fluidic interpenetration.

Nevertheless, I was not yet entirely enfranchised from terrestrial ideas; the remembrance of all that I had suffered came back, from time to time, to my mind, as though to make me more fully appreciate the happiness of my new position. I had suffered much corporeally; but I had suffered still more morally: I had been the object of malevolence, a prey to the thousand perplexities that sometimes cause more annoyance than do more serious misfortunes, because they keep us in a constant state of anxiety. The impression left by those worries was so far from having entirely disappeared, that I sometimes asked myself if I were really freed from them; it seemed to me, at times, that I still heard certain disagreeable voices; I feared a return of the troubles by which I was formerly so often tormented, and, in spite of myself, I trembled: I touched myself, so to say, to make sure that I was not dreaming; and when, at length, I acquired the certainty that I was really delivered from the troubles of the earthly life, I seemed to have thrown off an enormous load. "It is, then, really true," I exclaimed, "that I am at last delivered from the cares that are the torment of human life!" and I thanked God for this deliverance with the deepest gratitude. I felt like a poverty-stricken mortal who, having suddenly inherited an immense fortune, cannot, at first, realize the change in his position, and continue, for a while, to dread the torments of want. Ah! If men could but understand the nature of the future life, what strength, what courage they would derive in adversity, from their conviction of its reality! What would they not do, while they are upon Earth, to secure for them the happiness that God has prepared for those of His children who have been obedient to His laws! They would see how worthless are the earthly enjoyments by which they are tempted, in comparison with the enjoyments of the life to come, of which they think so little!

Q. Has the spirit-world, – which seems so new to you,⁶⁰ and in comparison with which our world seems to you of so little importance – and the numerous friends you have found there, caused you to lose sight of the family and friends you have left behind you upon the Earth?

A. If I could forget them, I should be unworthy of the happiness I am enjoying. God does not reward selfishness, but punishes it. The world in which I now am may make me indifferent to the Earth, but not to the spirits who are incarnated upon it. It is only among men that the prosperous forget their companions in misfortune. I often come back to visit those with whom I was connected in my earthly life; I rejoice in their affectionate remembrance of me; their thinking of me attracts me to them; I join them when they confer together; I share their joys and am saddened by their sorrows, but my sympathy for them is not the anxious distress of human sadness, because I see that their troubles are only temporary and for their own good. I rejoice in the thought that they will all arrive, sooner or later, in this happy abode, in which suffering is unknown. I apply myself, especially, to aiding them to

⁶⁰ The following statement was made to the Translator, some years ago, by the involuntary writing: –

"The spirit-life is never alike to us after successive incarnations. The spirit is changed by each new conjunction with flesh, and therefore *produces*, and *perceives*, a different set of externalized conditions after each return to the earthly life. This is why so many of the spirits who have been incarnated in your sphere do not recognize the spirit-sphere as having been known to them before. It is as new a life, in its way, each time we enter it. All the conditions and surroundings of the universe are merely temporary sets of relations and perceptions whose only actuality is in the consciousness of those who create them (for themselves and for the time being) by their perception of them." – TR.

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become worthy of this abode; I endeavor, by every means, in my power, to suggest good thoughts to their minds, and, above all, to fortify them in the resignation to the Divine will. My greatest grief is to see them retarding their own happiness by their want of courage, by murmuring, by doubts concerning the future, or by any reprehensible action. I try to turn them aside from the evil road; if I succeed, it is a great pleasure to me and to all our friends here; if I fail, I say to myself with regret: – “This is a new delay for them!” but I console myself with remembering that it is not forever, and that they will all reach the goal in time.

MR. VAN DURST

Formerly employed in a Government office; died at Antwerp, in 1863, at eighty years of age.

A medium having inquired of his spirit-guide, a short time after this gentlemen's decease, whether he could be evoked, received the following reply:

“This spirit is passing very slowly out of the state of confusion; it would be possible for him to answer your call, but it would be difficult and fatiguing for him to do so. You had better wait four days longer, when he will be ready to reply to you. Between this and that, he will have become aware of the kindly interest you have expressed for him, and he will come to you gratefully, and as a friend.”

Four days afterwards, the spirit in question dictated this communication:

Dear Friend, my earthly life was of slight importance, weighed in the scales of eternity; nevertheless, I am far from being unhappy. I am in the modest, but comparatively happy, position of one who, in the earthly life, did little wrong, and yet did not sufficiently aim at perfection. If people can be happy in a narrow sphere, I am of the number. I regret only one thing, which is, that I did not know what you know; my state of confusion would have been shorter and less painful. As it was, it caused me great suffering. Think what it must be to live, and yet not to live; to see your fleshly body, to be strongly bound to it, and yet to be unable to make use of it; to see those you love, and to feel that the mental action which unites you to them is becoming extinct – oh, what a terrible moment! How terrible to feel yourself stunned by an indefinable sensation that seizes and strangles you and, an instant afterwards, darkness! To be alive, and, the next moment, to feel yourself annihilated! You strive to regain the consciousness of your self, and you cannot grasp it; you no longer exist, and yet you feel that, nevertheless, you do exist, but in an abyss of confusion! And presently, after a lapse of time that you are unable to measure, a time of latent distress – for you have no longer the strength to feel it understandingly – after this lapse of time which seems to you interminable, to be slowly reborn into existence, to wake up in a new world! To no longer possess a material body, to no longer have part or lot in the earthly life; to feel that you are living the life of immortality! No longer to see about you men in heavy bodies of flesh, but to find yourself surrounded with the light and active forms of spirits, gliding beside you, and around you, in every direction, and in such numbers that your glance is unable to take them in; for they seem to fill the infinity of space in which they float! To see this infinity spread out before you, and to be able to transport yourself through it by the mere action of your will; to hold communion, by the mere action of your thought! Oh, Friends, what a different life from that of the Earth! What a brilliant life! What a life of delight! Hail, hail to thee, Eternity that hast received me into thy bosom! Adieu, Earth that hast held me back so long from the native element of my soul! No, I want nothing more of thee, for thou art a land of exile, and thy greatest happiness is – nothing!

But if, before quitting the Earth, I had known what you know, how much easier and more pleasant would have been my initiation into this other life! I should have known, before dying, what I had to learn afterwards, at the moment of separation; and my soul would have accomplished its disengagement much more easily. You are on the right road, but never, no, never upon the Earth, can

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you fully understand to what that road is leading you! Say this to my son; but say it to him so often that he may be brought to believe it, and to learn; let him do this, and, when he comes into the world in which I am, we shall not be separated.

Farewell, Friends, farewell to you all; I await your arrival here, and, while you remain upon the Earth, I shall often come to your meetings for enlightenment; for I do not yet know as much as is known by many among you. But I shall learn rapidly in this world where I have no longer any ties to hold me back, and where old age no longer weakens my faculties. Here, we live, and advance, largely and rapidly; for horizons ahead of us are so magnificent that we are impatient to reach them! And now I leave you my Friends. Farewell, farewell!

VAN DURST.

SIXDENIERS

An excellent man, killed by an accident, and who had been known to the medium during his life – Bordeaux, February 11th, 1861

Q. Can you give me any details concerning your death?

A. After the drowning, yes.

Q. Why not before?

A. You know all those details already. (This was the case.)

Q. Have the kindness to describe to me what you felt after your death.

A. It was long before I recovered my consciousness; but, with the grace of God and the help of the friends about me, when at length the light became visible, I was inundated by it. Be hopeful! You are sure to find, on coming here, more than you had looked for! Nothing of matter; everything is perceived by senses that are hidden from you during the life of the flesh; what can neither be seen by the eye nor touched by the hand; do you understand what I mean? It is an admiration of the spirit-being that surpasses your power of understanding, for there are no words that can explain it; it is something that can only be felt by the soul.

My awaking was very happy. The life of the Earth is one of those dreams that, notwithstanding the grotesqueness that you attach to the word, I can only speak of as *a nightmare*. Suppose you dream that you are in a filthy dungeon; that your body – devoured by worms which gnaw into the very marrow of your bones – is suspended above a fiery furnace; that your mouth, parched with thirst, finds not even a breath of air for refreshment; that your spirit, horror-stricken, sees around you only monsters ready to devour you; figure to yourself, in short, all the most hideous, most horrible fancies that the most fantastic dream can bring together for your torment, and then imagine yourself transported, all at once, into an Eden of delight! Imagine yourself to awake from your nightmare, and to find yourself surrounded by all those whom you have loved, whose loss you have wept, and whose beloved faces you see about you, looking upon you with joyous smiles; that you inhale the most exquisite perfumes and cool your parched throat at a spring of living water; that you are floated upwards, into the infinity of space, as lightly as the flower that the breeze carries off from the tree; that you feel yourself to be enveloped in the Infinite Love as the baby is enveloped in the love of its mother; fancy all this, and you will still have formed to yourself only a dim and faint idea of the transition! I have tried, by these similarities, to explain to you the happiness of the life that awaits man after the death of his body; but it is something that cannot be explained. Can the infinity of the sky be explained to the blind cripple whose eyes are closed to the light, and whose limbs have never been able to overstep the circle of powerlessness in which they are imprisoned? To give you an idea of the happiness of eternity, I would say to you, “*Love!*” for only love can show you a fore glimpse of that happiness; and *love* implies *absence of selfishness*.

Q. Was your situation a happy one, at once, on your entrance into the spirit-world?

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A. No, I had to pay the debt of my human life. Through my heart, I had divined the existence of a future life for the spirit, but I had no active faith in the future. I had therefore to expiate my indifference towards my Creator; but His mercy took account of the little good I had been able to do, the sorrows I had endured with resignation, notwithstanding the suffering they had caused me: and the Divine Justice, which holds the scales according to a rule that men cannot understand, weighed my merits with so much love and kindness, that my shortcomings were speedily effaced.

Q. Will you give me news of your daughter? (Deceased four or five years before her father)

A. She is fulfilling a mission upon your Earth.

Q. Is she happy in this reincarnation? I hope my question is not indiscreet?

A. I could not regard it as being such; do I not see your thought like *a picture*, before my eyes? No, her human life is not a happy one, but the opposite; she has to undergo all the troubles of your world, but she will illustrate, by her example, all the noble virtues about which men make so many fine phrases. I shall aid her; she will not have much difficulty in surmounting the obstacles in her path; *her present life is not an expiation, but a mission*. Be easy about her; and accept my thanks for your kind remembrance.

(At this moment, the medium found a difficulty in writing, and said: – “If it be a suffering spirit that is trying to take possession of my hand, I beg him to write his name.”)

A. One who is very unhappy.

Q. Be kind enough to tell me your name.

A. Valeria.

Q. Will you tell me what has brought your punishment upon you?

A. No.

Q. Do you repent of your wrongdoing?

A. You see that I do.

Q. Who brought you here?

A. Sixdeniers.

Q. For what purpose did he bring you here?

A. That you may help me?

Q. Was it you who hindered me from writing, just now?

A. He put me in his place.

Q. What connection is there between you?

A. He guides me.

Q. Ask him to join in the prayer we are going to offer up for you.

(After the prayer, Sixdeniers, taking possession of the medium's hand, wrote: – Thanks for her; you have understood what she needs; think of her.)

Q. (To Sixdeniers) Have you many suffering spirits to guide?

A. No, but, as soon as we have brought one back to the right road, we take in hand another; without, however, losing sight of those we formerly assisted.

Q. How can you suffice for exercising an oversight that must be multiplied to infinity in the course of time?

A. Those whom we bring back to virtue become purified and progress; they then give us less trouble; and besides, in raising them, we raise ourselves also, and, as we go up, our faculties progress, and our power radiates more widely in proportion to our purity.

Remark – Inferior spirits, then, are assisted by higher spirits, whose mission it is to bring them on; this task is therefore not exclusively committed to incarnates, though they too should take part in it, because it is for them also a means of advancement. When a spirit of lower degree impedes a communication, as in the present case, it is not always from a good motive; but the higher spirits permit the interruption, either as a trial for the medium's patience, or in order that he may labor for the

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amelioration of the interrupter. The persistence of the latter may sometimes, undoubtedly, degenerate into obsession; but the more tenacious the obsession, the greater, and the more evident, is the obsessor's need of assistance. It is therefore a mistake to repel such a spirit; we ought, on the contrary, to regard him as a mendicant who needs our charity. We should say to ourselves: – "Here is an unhappy spirit who has been sent to me by spirits of higher degree that I may carry on his education."⁶¹ If I succeed, I shall rejoice to have led back an erring soul to goodness, and to have shortened his sufferings. The task is often a painful one; it would, no doubt, be more agreeable to receive only high and beautiful communications, and to converse only with the spirits of our choice; but it is not by the exclusive seeking of our own satisfaction, and by turning away from the opportunities presented to us of doing good, that we shall merit the protection of spirits of high degree.

DR. DEMEURE

Died at Albi (Tarn) January 25th, 1865

Dr. Demeure was a distinguished homeopath physician of Albi. His moral excellence, as well as his great learning, had won for him the esteem and veneration of his fellow-townsmen. His kindness and charity were inexhaustible; and, notwithstanding his great age, he thought nothing of his fatigue when called upon to prescribe for the poor. His fees were the last thing he thought of; and he was even more ready to hasten to the bedside of the destitute than to those who were able to pay for his visits; "because the latter (he would often say), if he did not go to them, could always secure the aid of some other physician." To the poor, he not only gave the requisite medicines gratuitously, but frequently left them money for their daily needs, a species of help that is often the most beneficial of medicines. His benevolence was such that he might be fairly called *The Curate of Arts of the medical profession*.⁶²

Dr. Demeure had embraced, with ardor, the theory of Spiritism, because it gave him the key of the grave problems of which he had vainly sought the solution in science and in the various systems of philosophy. His profound and investigating mind had shown him, at once, the vastness of its scope, and he had consequently become one of its earliest and most zealous propagators. Relations of lively and mutual sympathy were established between him and ourselves through the correspondence that we had kept up for several years.

We were informed of his death on the 30th of January, and our first thought was to converse with him. Here is the communication we received from him on that day:

"I am here. I had promised myself, while alive, that, as soon as I was dead, I would come, if possible, to shake hands with my beloved teacher and friend, Allan Kardec.

"Death plunged my soul into the heavy sleep that we call lethargy; but my thought kept watch. I shook off the injurious torpor that prolongs the confusion that follows death, I roused myself to wakefulness and, with a single bound, I accomplished the journey!

"How happy I am! I am no longer old nor infirm. My earthly body was only an imposed disguise. I am young and handsome, embellished by the eternal youth of the spirit, whose face is never furrowed by wrinkles, whose hair is never whitened by the lapse of time. I am as light as the bird that

⁶¹ The hierarchal order of the Universe explains the fact, well-known to the members of "circles" formed for obtaining spirit-manifestations, viz., that ignorant and vicious spirits are often brought to them to be instructed and moralized, and are generally rendered better by the conversation and remonstrance of their members. "Why do you bring these low spirits to us, instead of acting upon them yourselves?" inquired the translator, on one occasion, of the higher spirit who had thus brought a lot of poor wretches to be taken in hand by a "circle" of which she was a member; "surely, you, who are so much higher than we are, must be able to act upon these unhappy spirits more effectually than we can do!"

"It is precisely because we are higher than you are," replied the Guide of the Circle, "that you can act upon them more effectually than we can do. Remember that all spiritual light comes down *from above*; and you will then understand how it is that *we cannot* act directly on spirits so low as these. They are *below you*; and therefore we can only reach them, and act upon them, *through you*." – TR.

⁶² A parish priest of such entire and admirable benevolence that his name has become "a household word" in France. – TR.

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traverses, on rapid wing, your cloudy sky; and I admire, contemplate, bless, love and adore – I, am atom before the grandeur, wisdom, and science of our Creator, and all the marvels by which I am surrounded.

“I am happy! I am in glory! Oh! What language could ever recount the splendid beauties of the Land of the Purified? The skies, the worlds, the suns, and the part played by them in the great convergence of universal harmony! Yet this will I try to do, O Friend and Teacher! I will make a study of this grand theme, and I will bring you the results of my spirit-labors, which I dedicate to you beforehand. I shall soon return.”

DEMEURE

The two following communications, received on the 1st and the 2nd of February, relate to the illness from which we were suffering at the moment. Although personal to ourselves, we give them here, because they show that the spirit of the excellent physician is as actively helpful in his present life as in his last one.

“My dear friend – Have confidence in us, and keep up your courage; this attack, though fatiguing and painful; will not last long, and you will be able, if you adopt the precautions we have suggested, to complete the work which is the principal aim of your present existence. I am always at your side with the Spirit of Truth, who allows me to speak in his name, as the last of your former friends that has arrived in the world of the Spirits. They are doing the honors of the reception. Dear Teacher, how glad I am to have died in time to be with you in this emergency! If I had died a little sooner, I might, perhaps, have been able to ward off this attack, which I did not foresee, having been too recently discarnated to be able to occupy myself with the things of your sphere. But now I shall always watch over you, and shall be with you constantly through this illness; but you know the proverb: “Heaven helps those who help themselves.” You must help your spirit-friends to be useful to you, by conforming strictly to their prescriptions.

It is too warm in this room; and your coal-fire oppresses you. While this attack lasts, do not burn coal; the gas with which the room is filled is very injurious, and adds to your difficulty in breathing. – Your friend,

Demeure”

“It is I, Demeure, the friend and disciple of Allan Kardec. I have come to tell that I was beside him when the accident occurred; its effects would have been far more serious, but for the efficacious intervention in which I was so happy to take part. From my own observations, as well as from the information I have obtained from higher spirits, I am quite aware that the sooner his discarnation takes place, the sooner will he be able to reincarnate himself, as he has to do, for the accomplishment of his task; nevertheless, he has still to finish the works which will complete the doctrinal initiation confided to him; and he will be guilty of voluntary homicide if he continues, by overwork, to increase the defectiveness of his organism, which threatens him with a sudden departure for the other world. There must be no hesitation in telling him the truth about himself, so that he may be on his guard and may follow our prescriptions to the very letter.”

DEMEURE

The following communication was obtained at Montauban, in January 26th, the day after his death by the Spiritist Society of that town.

Antoine Demeure

“I am not dead for you, dear Friends, but for those who, unlike you, are unacquainted with the admirable doctrine which reunites those who have loved one another upon the Earth, and who have shared the same sentiments of kindness and charity.

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“I am happy; happier than I could have hoped to be; for I enjoy a degree of lucidity that is rare among spirits who have only been disengaged from matter for so short a time. I shall often be near you, and I shall not fail to give you information in regard to many things of which we are unaware while we are attached to the paltry material body that shuts us out from so much magnificence and so many enjoyments. Pray for those who are deprived of the happiness of obtaining this knowledge. They little know how much they lose by their indifference to the light.

“I shall not remain long with you today; but I must just tell you that I do not feel by any means *a stranger* in the world that is invisible to you. It seems to me that I have always inhabited it. I am very happy here; for I see my friends on the Earth and can communicate with them whenever I wish to do so.

“Do not weep for me, my Friends; you would make me regret that I have known you! Let time do its work and you will be led on to this sojourn where we shall be reunited by and by. Good night, dear Friends; be consoled for my departure, for I am still near you.”

DEMEURE.

Another letter from Montauban contained the following narrative: –

“We had kept the knowledge of Dr. Demeure’s death from Madame G. (a seeing medium and very lucid somnambulist), in order not to excite her extreme sensitiveness; and the worthy doctor, no doubt appreciating our intentions, had avoided showing himself to her. On the 10th February last, we had assembled at the invitation of our guides, who, they told us, wished to relieve Madame G. of a sprained ankle, from which she had been suffering excruciatingly since the preceding day. This was all we knew of the matter, and we were far indeed from anticipating the surprise they had in store for us. Madame G. had no sooner passed into the state of somnambulism than she began to scream violently, pointing, meantime, to her foot.

“Madame G., as we later learned, perceived a spirit bending over her leg. His face was hidden from her view, as he energetically worked over her injured limb, appearing to rub and to massage it, utilizing a longitudinal drawing or pulling motion, exactly as would have been done by a physician in the flesh. The treatment was so painful that the patient uttered a succession of shrieks, writhing in her chair, in great agony. But the crisis was of short duration; in the course of ten minutes, every trace of the sprain had disappeared; the swelling of the ankle had subsided, and the foot had regained its normal appearance; Madame G. was perfectly cured.

“The spirit, however, was still unrecognized by the medium, and persisted in not allowing her to see his face; he even seemed to be going away, when Madame G., who, a few minutes before, could not have taken a single step, sprang to the middle of the room, determined to shake hands with her spirit-doctor and to thank him for curing her. As she did so, the latter again turned his head aside, while leaving his hand in hers, when Madame G. uttered a loud cry, and fell, unconscious, on the floor. She had caught sight of her doctor’s face, and instantly fainted away. While she remained in this state of unconsciousness, she was carefully tended by a group of sympathetic spirits; and her lucidity having presently returned, she conversed aloud with them, shaking hands with them, and exchanging with them tokens of the most cordial friendship, especially with the spirit of the doctor, who responded warmly to her expressions of affection, and restored her to her ordinary calmness by surrounding her with an atmosphere of health-giving fluids.

“Is not this little scene at once most natural and most dramatic, and do not the various actors who took part in it seem as though they were enacting an incident of the earthly life? Is it not a fresh proof, added to the thousand proofs of the fact which we possess already, that the spirits who people space are beings as real as we are, possessing bodies, and acting as they did when upon the Earth? We were delighted to find ourselves again with our valued friend, and to know that he retained, in his spirit-state, his excellent heart and his delicate solicitude. He had been, in life, the physician of the medium; he knew how extremely sensitive she was, and he endeavored to spare her feelings as

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carefully as though she had been his own child. And is not this proof of identity, given by the spirit to persons whom he loved when alive, a striking confirmation of the truth of the spiritist theory, and well calculated to lead us to regard the future under a most consoling aspect?"

Remark – The situation of Dr. Demeure, as a spirit, is precisely what his earthly life, so nobly and so usefully employed, might have led us to expect; but another indication, no less instructive, is furnished by the incident just narrated, viz., the activity which he employs, almost immediately after his death, in doing good. In virtue of his great intelligence and his eminent moral qualities, he belongs to a very advanced class of spirits; he is happy, but his happiness is not inaction. A few days before, he was attending on the sick, as a human physician; and, no sooner has he thrown off the coil of mortality, than he hastens to attend them as a spirit. "What advantage, then, shall we find in the other world," some people will ask, "if we are to have no rest when we get there?" To this query we reply by asking the querists whether they count it nothing to be delivered from the cares, needs, and infirmities of human life, to be free of its limitations, and to be able to travel through space, without fatigue and with the rapidity of thought, and to have the power of visiting one's friends, instantaneously, at anytime, no matter where they may be? And, having asked this, we add: – When you are in the other world, you will not be obliged to do anything whatever; you will be perfectly free to remain idle as long as it may please you to do so: but you will soon grow weary of so selfish a repose, and you will beg, of your own accord, for something to do. You will then be told that, if you are tired of doing nothing, you must look about you, and choose, for yourselves, what you would like to do; opportunities of being useful are not lacking, in the world of spirits, any more than in the world of men. Thus the activity of spirits is not a result of constraint; in the contrary, activity is, for them, a need and a satisfaction, because their avocations are chosen by themselves, according to their tastes and their aptitudes, and also, and especially, with a view to hastening their advancement.

MADAME FOULON, BORN WOLLIS

Madame Foulon, who died at Antibes, February the 3rd, 1865, had formerly resided for many years at Havre, where she enjoyed considerable reputation as a miniature painter. Her very remarkable proficiency had been, in her youth, merely a source of personal gratification; but, at a later period, a series of misfortunes compelled her to seek, in the exercise of her talent, for the means of support. What, especially, won for her the affection and respect of all who knew her and has rendered her memory dear to them, was the greatness of her character, and the admirable qualities which gave, to her private life, a charm that only those who knew her intimately could fully appreciate; for, as is the case with all those in whom it is innate, she made no display of her goodness, of which she seemed to be altogether unconscious. If ever any human being were absolutely without selfishness, it was she; no one ever carried further the sentiment of abnegation; she was always ready to sacrifice her ease, her health, her interests, for those to whom it was in her power to be useful. Her life, from her youth onwards, was one long succession of acts of devotedness, as it was, also, a long sequence of hard and severe trials, under which her resignation and perseverance never failed her. But, alas! Her eyesight, worn out by the long exercise of her art, had been growing weaker from day to day; it was but too evident that soon the blindness which had been gradually coming on for many years would have been complete.

When Madame Foulon first became acquainted with Spiritism, it was for her a ray of light; it seemed to her as though a veil had been withdrawn from something which had not been unknown to her, but of which she had had only a vague intuition; she accordingly studied its doctrine with ardor, but, at the same time, with the clearness of mind and the correctness of judgment which were natural to her lofty intelligence. Only those who knew the anxieties of her life – anxieties which were always prompted, not by her own position, but by that of those who were dear to her – can understand the

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value she attached to the sublime revelation which gave her the consolation of an immovable faith in the future, based on its explanation of the sorrows of the present life, and its demonstration of the nothingness of terrestrial things. Her death was worthy of her life. She watched its approach without apprehension; it was, for her, a deliverance from terrestrial bondage, an introduction to the happier life with which she had already identified herself by the study of Spiritism. She died calmly; because conscious of having accomplished the mission which she had accepted on coming back to the Earth, of having scrupulously fulfilled all the duties of a wife and mother, and also because she had, during her whole life, abjured all feeling of resentment against those who had wronged her and repaid her kindness with ingratitude, and to whom she had always returned good for evil. She passed out of this sphere of being with no other feeling than that of forgiveness towards all those of whom she might justly have complained, trusting that the pardon she so freely accorded to others would be accorded to her by the Judge before whom she was about to appear. She died, in short, with the serenity imparted by a clear conscience and the certainty that she would, in the spirit-world, be less separated from her children than in the life of the flesh, since she could, thenceforward, be with them, as a spirit, at whatever point of the Earth's surface they might be, to aid them with her counsels and to shield them with her protection.

Having received the news of her death, our first thought was to enter into communication with her. The intimate and sympathetic friendship that had grown up between us, based on her devotion to the spiritist philosophy, explains the freedom and familiarity of her messages.

I

Paris, February 6th, 1865; three days after her death

I was sure that you would have the idea of evoking me at once, after my deliverance, and I held myself ready to reply to you, for I felt no confusion during the separation; it is only those who dread death that find themselves in its darkness.

How happy I am! These poor eyes, that had grown so weak, and that showed me only the remembrance of the prisms that had colored my youth with their resplendent hues, have re-opened to the light amidst the splendid horizons that are faintly represented by a few of your greatest artists, but of which the majestic reality is pervaded by a subtle charm that no earthy pencil could render!

It is but three days since I died, and I still feel as an artist; my aspirations, after the ideal of beauty in art, were the intuition of faculties that I had acquired, and studies that I had carried on, in anterior existences, and that I developed still further in my last. But what progress I should have to make, in order to portray the magnificent spectacle that greets the spirit on arriving in this realm of light! Give me a palette, give me brushes, and I would prove to the world that spiritist art is the crown of pagan art, of Christian art now in its decline; and that it is reserved for Spiritism alone to re-kindle the glory of art in your world.

But enough of the artist, – now, for the friend:

“Why, my dear (to Madame Allan Kardec), should you be so much affected by my death? You, especially, who knew how full of pain and disappointment was my life, should rather *rejoice* to see that I have no longer to drink from the bitter cup of terrestrial sorrows which I was compelled to drain to the very dregs! Believe me, the dead are happier than the living; to weep for them is to doubt the truth of Spiritism. You will see me again; be sure of *that*. I have gone first, because my task in your world was finished; and, when yours is done, you will come and take a rest near me, to begin a new task afterwards, for it is not in nature to remain inactive. Each has his tendencies, and follows their lead, a law that proves the power of our freewill. Therefore, my dear, cultivate indulgence and charity; we all need them, in the visible world and in the invisible world; with this motto for our guide, all goes on well.

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You will not tell me to stop, though I am talking on a long while for a first attempt! So I leave you, to converse with my excellent friend, Mr. Kardec, whom I have to thank for the affectionate words he has addressed to the friend who has gone before him to the world to which we came very near going together! (alluding to the illness spoken of by Dr. Demeure). What would she have said to that – the beloved companion of your life – if your good spirit-friends had not taken you in hand? It is then that she would have wept and groaned; and I can quite understand the grief in which it would have plunged her! But she must see to it that you do not again expose yourself to the danger of returning too quickly among us, and of leaving unfinished the work of initiating the spiritist movement; without that caution, you run the risk of arriving here among us, much too soon, and not be able to see, as Moses, the “Promised Land” except from afar, therefore, be on your guard; it is a friend who utters this word of warning.

And now I leave you; I must return to my children; after that, I shall go and look after my wandering sheep, to see if she has reached the port safely, or if she is still the sport of the tempest (one of her daughters, who had gone to America.) May the good spirits protect her! I shall join them. Soon, I shall come back to have a chat with you; you know I was always an indefatigable talker!

V. FOULON.

II

(February 8th, 1865)

Q. Dear Madame Foulon, I was most happy to get the communication from you, the other day, and to receive your promise to come and talk with us again. I perfectly recognized you in your message; for you alluded to matters that were quite unknown to the medium, and which could only have been spoken of by you; and your affectionate language, to us, is the true utterance of your good and loving nature. But there is, in what you said, a degree of certainty, firmness, and boldness that I never knew you to display while you were in this world. You remember that, in regard to this point, I more than once ventured to admonish you.

A. That is true; but, from the time I found myself seriously ill, I regained my strength of mind, which had been shaken by the sorrows and troubles that had rendered me timid. I said to myself: – “You are a spiritist; forget the Earth; prepare for the transformation of your being; fix your eyes, in thought, on the shining path that your spirit will follow on quitting your body, and which will lead you, happy and released from earthly sorrows, to the celestial spheres in which you will thenceforth dwell.”

You will perhaps tell me that it was somewhat presumptuous, on my part, to count on attaining to perfect happiness on leaving the Earth; but I had suffered so much that it seemed to me I must have expiated the faults of that life and of all my previous lives. This intuition did not deceive me. It gave me back my courage and rendered me calm and firm in my last moments; and this firmness has naturally increased, since I have seen my hopes fulfilled.

Q. Can you please describe to us your passage, your awakening, and the first impression caused by the sight of the world in which you are?

A. I suffered much in passing away, but my spirit was superior to the physical suffering caused by the effort of disengagement. I found myself, after the last sigh, in a state similar to a fainting fit, having no consciousness of my position, thinking of nothing, and plunged in a vague somnolence that was neither the sleep of the body nor the waking of the soul. I remained for a considerable time in this state; then, as though coming out of a long sleep, I awakened in the midst of a company of friends whom I did not know, but who were surrounding me with affectionate attentions and caresses, and who pointed to a shining speck, far off in space, that looked like a brilliant star, and said to me, “That is where you are going to, with us; you have ceased to belong to the Earth!” As they spoke, my

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memory came back to me; supported by them, I accompanied the graceful group of friends in their flight towards the unknown region to which they had directed my glance; and we continued to rise up, a conviction of coming happiness filling my whole being, and the beautiful star growing larger and larger as we approached it. It was a high and happy world, in which your old friend will, at last, enjoy repose; I mean, repose from the bodily fatigues and wearing vicissitudes that for so long I had to endure in the earthly life, but not indolence, for activity is a source of enjoyment for spirits.

Q. Have you definitively quitted the Earth?

A. I have left upon the Earth too many of those I love to be able to quit it definitively at present; I shall come back to it as a spirit, for I have a mission to fulfill to my grandchildren. You know already that there is nothing to prevent a spirit, who is staying in a higher world than the Earth, from coming to visit those who are incarnated in it.

Q. But will not your present elevation weaken the tie between you and those you have left down here?

A. No; affection keeps souls together. Believe me, it is possible for those who are upon the Earth to be nearer to the spirits of those who have reached a very high degree of advancement, than to those whose inferiority and selfishness keep them circling round the terrestrial globe. Love and charity are two motors of immense attractive force. They are the links that maintain union between souls who are attached to each other, notwithstanding distances of place and time. Distance only exists for bodies; there is no distance for spirits.

Q. What is now your opinion concerning my spirit labors?

A. I see that your mission is one of the most serious importance and that your burden is a heavy one; but I see the end for which you are working, and I see also that you will attain it. I will help you, if I can, with my counsels, that you may overcome the difficulties that will be thrown in your way, and that you may be led to adopt certain measures calculated to quicken, during your lifetime, the renovating movement that is the aim of Spiritism. Your friend Demeure, along with the Spirit of Truth, will provide you with a greater helping hand, as he is more wise and clear headed than I; but, as I know that it is the assistance of the good Spirits which sustains you in your work, you may be sure that what help I can give you will always be at your service.

Q. It would seem, from what you say that you will not take any active personal share in the establishment of Spiritism?

A. You are mistaken; but I see so many spirits who are better able than I am to treat of this immense subject, that a feeling of timidity prevents my replying to you, at this time, as you would wish. By and by I may feel more confidence in my power to help; but I must first have time to look about me. It is only four days since I died; I am still dazzled by the splendor of everything around me; can you not understand that dear Friend? I am unable to describe the new sensations that I experience. I have had to do violence to myself in order to tear my mind away from the fascination exercised upon it by the marvels it admires. I can only bless and adore the Almighty in His works. But this state of excitement will pass; my spirit-friends assure me that I shall soon become accustomed to all this magnificence, and that I shall then be able, with clearness of thought, to treat of all that relates to the renovation of the Earth. And, besides you must remember that I have, still, a whole family to visit and to console.

Farewell for the present; I shall soon come to you again; for your friend loves and will always love you, as the teacher to whom she owes the only true and lasting consolation she enjoyed upon the Earth.

V. FOULON

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III

The following communication was received from her, for her children, in February 9th: –

My beloved children, God has called me away from you; but the reward He has deigned to grant me is great indeed, in comparison with the little I was able to do when upon the Earth. Be resigned, my dear children, to the will of the Highest draw, from all that He has permitted you to receive, strength to support the trials of life. Keep firm, in your hearts, the belief that so greatly facilitated my passage from the earthly life to the life that awaits us all on our exit from your lower sphere. God extended me, upon my death, His inexhaustible kindness as He had wished while on Earth. Be grateful for all the benefits that he has concede to you. Bless Him my children. Bless Him always and in every instant. Never lose sight of the aim that has been given you to see, nor of the road that you have to follow; make good use of the time that God grants to you upon the Earth. It is thus, my beloved ones that you will be happy; happy in each other, happy in your children, if you bring them up to follow the road upon which you have been permitted to enter.

Though you can no longer see me, be quite sure that the bond which united us in the earthly life is not severed by the death of the body, for it was not by the envelope of the soul that we were united, but by the soul itself; and it is through this union, my darlings, that I shall still, through the bounty of God, be able to guide you and to encourage you in your march to this other life, in which we shall all be reunited by and by.

Weep not, my children; let the communication between us, which we are permitted to maintain, strengthen your faith and your love of God, who has bestowed so many blessings upon you, who has so often sent help to your mother. Pray to Him, bless Him, love, Him; and conform your lives to the teachings that I followed with so much ardor.

I shall return to you, my dear ones; but I must now go to your poor sister, who is so much in need of my presence. Put your trust in the Almighty, to whom I pray for you. Prayer is the great fortifier.

WIDOW FOULON

Remark – The enlightened spiritist will readily draw, from these communications, the teachings they convey; we will therefore ask attention only to two points. The first of these is the proof furnished by this example that a spirit may finish his incarnation in this world and go hence to a higher one, without being thereby separated from the beings whom he has loved down here. Those who dread reincarnation in this world, on account of the miseries of human life, may therefore escape from that necessity by doing, in their present life, all that they ought to do, that is to say, in working out their own improvement. It is, in this matter, as in all others; he who would rise from a lower grade to a higher one must study and work to that end, instead of idly vegetating in his inferior position.

The second point is the confirmation of the truth that, after death, we are less separated from those we love than we are during life. Madame Foulon, kept by age and infirmity in a little town in the south of France, had only a part of her family near her; most of her children and friends were dispersed in various directions, and various obstacles prevented her seeing them as often as she, and they, would have wished. The great distance that separated some of them from her rendered even epistolary correspondence between them rare and difficult. But scarcely is she freed from the encumbrance of clay than, light as the breeze, she hastens to each of them, traverses wide distances without fatigue and with the rapidity of electricity, sees them, takes part in their most intimate familiar reunion, surrounds them with her protection, and is able, by means of the mediumistic faculty, to converse with them at any moment, as though she were still in the flesh. And to think that there are people who prefer, to a possibility so consoling, the idea of an indefinite separation!

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A RUSSIAN PHYSICIAN

Dr. P. was a physician from Moscow, equally remarkable for his eminent virtues and for his knowledge. The person who evoked him had known him only by reputation, and had never had any direct communication with him. The following communication was made in Russian:

Q. (After the evocation) Are you there?

A. Yes. On the day of my death, I pursued you with my presence, but you resisted all my attempts to make you write. I had heard what you said about me, and this had made me acquainted with you, and had given me a wish to speak with you, and to be of use to you.

Q. Why was it that you, who were so good, had to undergo so much suffering during your life?

A. My suffering was a favor granted to me by Providence, in order that I might the more fully appreciate my deliverance, and also to make me advance as much as possible while on Earth.

Q. Did the thought of death cause you any terror?

A. No; I had too much faith in God for that.

Q. Was the separation painful?

A. No. What you call “the last moment” is nothing at all; I felt only a very short *crack*, and then, very soon afterwards, I found myself, to my great joy, delivered from my miserable carcass.

Q. What happened then?

A. I saw, to my delight, a great number of friends who had come to meet and to welcome me; among them were many of those whom I had had the satisfaction of helping on Earth.

Q. What region do you inhabit? Is it in a planet?

A. Whatever is not a planet is what you call “space;” it is there that I am. But how many degrees are there in this immensity of which men can form no idea! How many rungs to this “Jacob’s ladder,” that reaches from the Earth to heaven, that is to say, from the debasement of incarnation on a low Earth like yours, to the complete purification of the soul! Where I am, we only arrive after many trials; in other words, after many incarnations.

Q. At that rate, you must have had many existences?

A. How could it be otherwise? Nothing is exceptional in the immutable order established by God. The reward can only be given after the victory has been won through struggle; therefore, when the reward is great, the struggle must necessarily have been severe. Life of the human being is so short that the struggle is only fulfilled in stages with intervals, and these intervals are the different successive existences; and as I have already reached a rung that is a good way up, it is certain that I must have attained to this happiness through a succession of combats in which, with the help of God, I have succeeded in gaining the victory.

Q. In what does your happiness consist?

A. That is something that would be very difficult to make you understand. The happiness I enjoy may be described as a sense of intimate satisfaction with myself; not with my own merits, which would be pride, and pride is the characteristic of reprobate spirits, but a self-contentment merged, so to say, in love of God, in gratitude for His infinite goodness; it is the profound joy of seeing myself to be in unison with what is good and right; of saying to myself, “Perhaps I have contributed to the elevation of some of those who have raised themselves towards the Lord.” It is the feeling of having identified one’s self with the current of the Divine Order; it is a sort of conscious fusion of the mind with the Divine Goodness. We have also the gift of seeing the fully purified spirits above us, of comprehending them in the missions they discharge, and of knowing that we shall reach the same elevation; we obtain glimpses, in the incommensurableness of infinity, of regions so effulgent with the divine fire, that we are dazzled by the contemplation of them, even through the veil with which they are still covered. But what am I telling you? Can you understand my words? Do you imagine, for instance, that this fire of which I speak to you is similar to the sun? No, no; it is something absolutely indescribable to man,

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because words express only objects, things, physical or metaphysical, of which he has knowledge from memory or from soul-intuition; but, as he cannot have this remembrance of what is absolutely unknown to him, there are no terms that can give him a perception of it. But, remember that *there is an immensity of happiness merely in knowing that we can raise ourselves higher and higher forever.*

Q. You have been so kind as to say that you wished to be of use to me; please tell me, in what way can you help me?

A. I can aid you in your moments of discouragement, sustain you in your hours of weakness, and console you in your hours of grief. If your faith, shaken by some shock, should waver, call me; the inspiration from on high will enable me to suggest to your mind the train of thought that will lead you back to the calmness of an assured belief. If you feel the danger of succumbing to tendencies that you know are incorrect, call me; I will assist you to bear your cross, just as Jesus was assisted in carrying His, the one with which He with such dignity proclaimed, the truth and charity. If you stagger under the weight of your troubles, if despair takes hold of you, call me; I will draw you from the abyss by speaking to your spirit, and will recall you to the duties that are laid upon you, not by social considerations, but by the attraction of the love which you will feel in me, and which will rekindle the flame of the divine life in you.

You have, without a doubt, friends on Earth. Perhaps they share your pains and perhaps they have been able to help you. During your afflictions you are going to take them your tears and laments, and they will offer you in return the proof of their affection and their good advice, their attention and their help. Well then, don't you think that a friend from here will equally be a good thing? Is it not a consolation to be able to say: "when I'll die, my friends from Earth will be crying and praying for me, but my friends from space will be in the other side of life, smiling due to our reencounter and in order to conduct me to the place that I may have merited due to my virtues?"

Q. How can I have deserved the protection you are kind enough to offer me?

A. I will tell you how it came to pass that I have felt an attachment to you since the day of my death. I saw that you were a sincere and enlightened spiritist and a good medium; among those I have left below, you were the first whom I perceived; and I at once resolved to come to you and to help you to advance, for your own sake, and, still more, for the sake of the many whom you will help to bring to the truth. You can see the depth of God's love for having conferred you with the rank of missionary; little by little, you are leading all about you to share your belief. Do not weary in the good work; in time, the most obstinate will be with you. Go forward steadily, unmindful of the stones in the road; and when you grow tired, take me as a staff to help you on your way.

Q. I cannot venture to think that I deserve so great a favor?

A. You are still, undoubtedly, far from perfection; but your ardor in propagating the truth, in sustaining the faith of those who listen to you, and in proclaiming the necessity of charity, kindness, benevolence, even in return for ill usage; – your resistance to the indulgence of the anger which is natural to you, and which you could so easily gratify against those who afflict you or misunderstand you – form a counterpoise to the defects of which you have not yet rid yourself; for the forgiveness of others is the first condition of forgiveness for one's self.

God enfolds you with His graces through the faculties with which He endowed you. It is now up to you to develop them through your efforts intent on working efficiently for the salvation of your fellow man. I leave you now; but you may count upon my help. Try to live each time less for the things of the earthly life, and more and more for the interests of the life to come.

P.

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BERNARDIN
Bordeaux, April 1862

I am a spirit who has been forgotten for many centuries; I lived upon the Earth in poverty and opprobrium. I toiled unremittingly to earn, each day, a morsel of bread for my family; but I loved Him whom I regarded as my veritable Master, and when my load of suffering was added to by him who was my master upon the Earth, I used to say, "My God, give me the strength to bear up under this load without complaining!" I was thus expiating an evil past; but, when I came forth from this great trial, my true Master received me into His peace; and now my most earnest desire is to say to you all: "Men, my brethren! whatever price you have to pay for your purification, the happiness that awaits you will amply overpay it!"

I had no regular trade. I was one of a numerous family of children, and I was at the service of anyone who could help me to get my livelihood. Born at a period in which all servants were hardly and cruelly treated, I endured all the injustice, all the enforced labor, all the grinding and robbing, that the subalterns of my owner chose to inflict upon me. I saw my wife outraged, my daughters carried away and then cast off, without being able to utter a complaint; I saw my sons torn from me and forced to fight in wars for pillage and for every crime, and hung for faults they had not committed! Ah, Friends! If you only knew what I had to endure in that long and wretched life! But I was sustained by the hope of a happiness not of the Earth; and my hope was fulfilled. I have a right to say to you, "Brothers! Courage, patience, resignation!"

My child (to the medium), preserve what I have written; it is a practical teaching. He who preaches is much more attentively listened to when he can say: – "I have borne more than you have to bear; and I have borne without complaining!"

Q. At what period did you live down here?

A. From 1400 to 1460.

Q. Have you had another earthly existence since then?

A. Yes, I have lived among you as a missionary, a missionary of the faith; of the true and pure faith, of the faith that comes from God, not that which men have made for you.

Q. Have you, as a spirit, any occupations?

A. Can you imagine that spirits remain inactive? Inaction, uselessness, would be torture for them. My mission is to lead the workmen of the great industrial centers to Spiritism. I inspire them with good thoughts and endeavor to neutralize those that backward spirits try to suggest to them.

BERNARDIN

COUNTESS PAULA

She was young, beautiful, and rich; of a birth such as the world calls illustrious; and, moreover, an accomplished model of the noblest qualities of heart and of mind. She died in 1851 at the age of thirty-six. She was one of those whose funeral oration is summed up in the words, in every one's mouth, "Why are such people called away from the Earth?" Happy are they whose memory is thus framed in blessing! She was good, gentle, and indulgent for everyone; always ready to excuse or to attenuate evil, instead of envenoming it; never did a slander pollute her lips. Without pride or haughtiness, she treated her inferiors with a kindness equally exempt from vulgar familiarity and humiliating condescension. Knowing that those who live by their labor, or by trade, need prompt payment of whatever is due to them, she kept no one waiting for wages or for pay. The thought that any such delay, on her part, had caused suffering or inconvenience to a fellow-creature, would have filled her with remorse. She was not one of those who always have plenty of money for the

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gratification of their caprices, but who never have money in hand for the payment of a bill; she never imagined that it was in good taste for one who is rich to be in debt; and she would have felt herself disgraced if it could have been said of her that her trades-people were obliged to give her credit. For that reason, her death provoked so much lamentation and pain, and no complains.

Her beneficence was inexhaustible, but it was not the beneficence that makes a parade of its exercise; her charities were prompted by kindness, not by ostentation. God only knows the tears she dried, the despairing hearts she calmed and strengthened; for her good deeds had no other witnesses than those who were the recipients of her goodness. She had the gift of finding out the cases of distress – the most poignant of all! – in which the sufferers strive to hide their misery from the world; and she assisted such sufferers with a delicacy that raised the self-respect of those she aided, instead of humiliating them.

Her rank, and the high official position occupied by her husband, obliged her to keep up the style of living obligatory under such circumstances; but while providing largely for the necessities of her social condition, she managed her household expenses with so much order and judgment, and so carefully avoided all waste and all unnecessary outlay, that she spent scarcely the half of what would have been spent, without making any better show, by most people in her position.

Through this judicious management of her fortune, she was able to devote a large portion of her means to the relief of the needy. She had begun her married life by setting apart a considerable portion of her capital, the interest of which was exclusively devoted by her to this purpose, sacred in her eyes; and she thenceforth regarded herself as having so much the less to spend on herself and her household. In this way, she succeeded in reconciling the duties she owed to her position and to society, with the unwearied activity in doing good, imposed on her equally by her heart and by her conscience.⁶³

Evoked, twelve years after her death, by a relative of hers who had become a spiritist, she gave the following communication in answer to the various questions addressed to her.⁶⁴

“You are right, my Friend, in supposing me to be happy; I am happy beyond the power of words to express, and yet I am still a long way from the top of the ladder! I am incomparably happier than I was upon the Earth, although I was one of the most fortunate of mortals, for I do not remember ever having felt, through all my life, a real sorrow. I had youth, health, fortune, the homage of all around me, everything that is considered by you as constituting felicity; but what are these in comparison with the happiness we enjoy here? What are your most splendid festivities, in which the guests display their richest attire, in comparison with the gatherings of spirits, clad in resplendent brightness of which your eyes could not bear the dazzling lustre, but which is the natural appanage of purity? What are your palaces with their gilded drawing rooms, your loveliest gardens, in comparison with the aerial dwellings, the vast fields of space, variegated with colors that would make the rainbow seem pale and dim? What are your slow walks and journeying to our flights through immensity, more rapid than the lightning? What are your narrow and cloudy horizons to the grand spectacle of the infinity of worlds, moving through the boundless immensity of the universe, under the controlling hand of the Almighty? How harsh and meaningless are your most melodious concerts in comparison with the delightful harmony that sets in vibration all the fluids of the ether and all the fibers of the soul? How dull and insipid are your greatest joys, compared with the ineffable sense of happiness with which our whole being is constantly pervaded as with a beneficent effluvium, without the intermixture of the slightest uneasiness, the slightest apprehension, the slightest suffering? Here, everything breathes love, trust, and sincerity; everywhere we find loving hearts, everywhere we meet with friends, nowhere do we

⁶³ It can be said that this lady was the living example of the charitable lady referred to in “The Gospel According to Spiritism.”

⁶⁴ We give, of this communication – written in German – only the portions of general interest, omitting those that referred to family matters.

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encounter anything like envy or jealousy. Such, my Friend, is the world in which I am, and which you will infallibly reach, if you follow the right road.

But happiness, however delightful, would soon become wearisome if it were monotonous. Do not imagine that ours is without change; it is neither a perpetual concert, nor an endless festival, nor a stupid state of eternal contemplation: no, it is a movement, life, and activity! Our occupations, though exempt from fatigue, impart an inexhaustible variety of aspects and of emotions to our existence, through the countless incidents to which they give rise. Each of us has a mission to fulfill, wards to assist, friends to visit upon the earth, some portion of the wheelwork of nature to direct, suffering spirits of lower degree to console; we come and go, not from one street to another, but from one world to another; we assemble, we separate, to come together again; we arrange to meet at some given point, we recount what we have done, and we felicitate one another on the success of our various efforts; we concert together, and we aid one another reciprocally, in cases of difficulty; no one, I assure you, has leisure to feel dull for a second!

At the present time, our great subject of interest is the Earth. What a movement is now going on among spirits, what numerous troops are hastening from every point, to take part in the work of its transformation! They are like an army of laborers, busy with the reclaiming of a forest, under the orders of experienced chiefs. Some are knocking down the old trees and grubbing up the deep roots; others are clearing the ground of stones and rubbish; others, again, are plowing, digging, sowing, and planting. Meanwhile, the chiefs hold council together, and send out messengers, who carry their orders in every direction. The Earth is to be regenerated by a certain fixed time; the designs of Providence must be accomplished; and everyone else is therefore hard at work. You must not suppose that I look on, as a mere spectator, while everyone is busy; on the contrary, an important post is confided to me, and I am doing my utmost to discharge its duties worthily.

I have not reached my present rank in the spirit-world without many struggles; believe me, my last earthly life, alone, whatever may have been its merits, would not have sufficed to give me this elevation. During many previous existences, I had passed through the trials of labor and of poverty that I had voluntarily chosen in order to strengthen and purify my soul. I had had the happiness of emerging victorious from those trials; but I had still one more trial to undergo – the most perilous of all! – viz., that of *earthly fortune and happiness without any mixture of grief or disappointment*. There was my danger! Before subjecting myself to this severest of all trials, I desired to be strong enough to avoid all danger of succumbing to its temptations. The Divine Master took account of my good intentions and granted me the needed help in carrying them out. A great many spirits, seduced by appearances, hasten to choose the dangerous test of earthly prosperity; too weak and inexperienced, alas! to withstand its dangers, they are vanquished by the temptations of the lot they have unwisely chosen.

Workmen! I have lived in your ranks; I, the noble lady, have earned my bread, like you, with the sweat of my brow. I have borne all kinds of privation and suffered from all the inclemency of the weather; and it is those sufferings that developed the virile strength of my soul; without them, I should probably have failed under my last trial, and that failure would have thrown me back a long way.⁶⁵ Like me, you will all of you, in your turn, have to undergo the trial of worldly prosperity, but do not be in haste to ask for it, lest you should attempt it too soon; and you who are rich, remember, at all times, that the true imperishable fortune is not upon the Earth, and understand in what way you can earn the blessing of the Most High.

PAULA, Upon the Earth, Countess of _____”

⁶⁵ She would not have retrograded as a spirit, for that is impossible; but she would have had to recommence a new series of earthly lives, in order to acquire, in them, the strength she still lacked. A scholar, who has foisted himself into a class for which he is not fully prepared by his mastery of the lessons of the classes below it, *does not retrograde*, but *progresses*, by being made to go back to those lower classes, and to remain in them, until he has thoroughly mastered the preparatory lessons which alone can enable him to enter, with profit and honor, on the studies of that higher class. TR.

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JEAN REYNAUD⁶⁶*(Spiritist Society of Paris; spontaneous communication.)*

My friends, how magnificent is this new life! Like a luminous torrent, it draws with it, on its way, the souls who are athirst for the infinite! After the rupture of the fleshly links that held me to the Earth, my eyes opened upon the splendid horizons that are now around me and reveled in the splendid wonders of boundless space. I passed from the shadows of matter to the resplendent dawn that heralds the Almighty. I am in happiness, not through any merit of my deeds, but through the knowledge of the eternal principle which enabled me to avoid the stains which the hapless race of men contract through ignorance. My death was most peaceful. My biographers will regard it as premature; blind judges! They will regret a few writings born of dust, and they will not understand how useful, to the holy cause of Spiritism, will be the attention excited by my death! My work was done; those who are destined to outstrip me were already pressing forward upon the road; I had reached the culminating point at which a man has produced his best, and, after which, whatever he does is but the repetition of what he has already done. My death will re-awaken the attention of the learned and bring it back to my principal work, that touches the great spiritist question,⁶⁷ which they affect to ignore, and which will soon catch them in its net. Glory to God! Aided by the spirits of high degree who are directing the propagation of the new doctrine, I shall be one of the torchbearers stationed at intervals along your road, to light and to guide you on your way.

JEAN REYNAUD

(Paris; at a family-party of relatives of the deceased. Another spontaneous communication)

The spirit is replying to a remark made by those present concerning his early death, which had caused such general surprise.

“How do you know that my death will not be an advantage to the future of Spiritism, to the development of the consequences to which it leads? Have you considered the path that is being taken by Providence for the establishment of the spiritist faith? God has giving physical proof of the action of some extra-mundane force, “the turning tables,” raps, and all sorts of physical phenomena; this was done to excite inquiry; it was an amusing preface, intended to attract attention to the book. At present, it is quite another thing! After striking men’s senses by physical facts, Providence addresses their intelligence, their common sense, their judgment; it no longer appeals to them by feats and prodigies, but by trains of reasoning that should convince the most skeptical and rally to the new doctrine the most obstinate unbelievers. And all this is only the beginning of the movement. Remember what I now tell you; viz., that an entire series of intelligent facts, absolutely undeniable, are about to follow one another, and that the number of followers of the spiritist philosophy, already so numerous, will be greatly increased. The Divine action will be brought to bear on the noblest intellects, on the highest minds, on those who are most eminent for talent and knowledge. It will be a flood of light that will spread over the Earth with the irresistible force of the magnetic fluid, compelling the most reluctant to seek after the infinite, to study this admirable unfolding which furnishes us with principles of action so sublime. All the masterminds of the Earth will join your group, and, indifferent to the honors paid to their genius, will become as little children in their desire to acquire knowledge of the truths of the spiritist faith. And when, with the humility of the sage, they have acquired this knowledge, they will employ their science and their authority of their name in carrying on, still farther, the inquiry upon which you have entered, and the endeavor to reach the aim set before you by Spiritism, that is to say,

⁶⁶ This eminent philosopher, author of “*Terre et Ciel*,” was one of the precursors of the Spiritist doctrine of Reincarnation. – TR.

⁶⁷ That of the plurality of existences, *vide* footnote, number 66.

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the regeneration of the human race through the rational and enlightened explanation of the fact of our past and future existences.”

(BORDEAUX)

(In answer to evocation) – I come with pleasure, responding to your call. You are right; the mental confusion of the passage scarcely existed in my case (this remark was in answer to the medium’s thought.) A voluntary exile upon your Earth, in which I had undertaken to scatter abroad the first seeds of the great truths that are overshadowing the world at the present day, I had always preserved the remembrance of the country I had left, and I speedily felt myself at home on arriving in the midst of my brothers.

Q. Thanks for your kindness in coming to me; I hardly ventured to hope that my desire to converse with you could have any influence upon you. There must necessarily be so great a difference between us that I can only think of you with reverence!

A. Whatever the distance created between spirits by the greater or less degree of promptitude and of success with which they accomplish their series of trials, there is always a link that unites them; that of sympathy: and this sympathy, in our case, has been rendered all the closer by your constant thought of me.

Q. A good many spirits have already described to us their first sensations on awakening in the other life; will you have the kindness to tell me what you felt on regaining your consciousness, and how the separation of your soul and body was effected?

A. As it is in all cases, I felt that the moment of deliverance was approaching; but happier in this respect than most others, that approach caused me no uneasiness, because I knew what would be the results of my deliverance, although these were still greater than I had anticipated. The body is an obstacle upon the action of the soul; and, no matter what may be the faculties it has brought with it; they are always more or less stifled by content with matter. I fell asleep, hoping for a happy awaking; my sleep was short; my admiration, on awaking was immense! The celestial splendors, spread out before me, were shining in all their brightness. My sight, with wondering admiration, plunged into immensity, filled with the worlds that I had affirmed to be infinite in number and inhabited. It was a mirage that confirmed the truth of the convictions I had proclaimed when upon the Earth. However sure a man may think himself, when he speaks, there are moments when, in his heart, he is conscious of doubt, of uncertainty; he has misgivings, if not in regard to the truth he proclaims, at least, in regard to the imperfection of the demonstration he is obliged to employ for proving it. Convinced of the truth of the doctrine I was endeavoring to inculcate, I often had to fight against myself, against the discouragement of seeing and touching the truth, so to say, without being able to render it palpable for those who have so great a need of believing it, in order to walk on steadily in the path that has been appointed to them.

Q. Did you, during your life, profess yourself a spiritist?

A. There is a wide difference between professing and practicing. Many profess a doctrine and yet do not practice it. I practiced it without professing it. Just as every man is a Christian who follows the law of Christ, even though he knows not of its existence, so every man may be said to be a spiritist, if he believes in the immortality of the soul, its pre-existences, its incessant progression, and the disciplinary nature of the earthly life, as ablutions necessary to his purification; I believed all this; and I may therefore be said to have been a spiritist. I had an intuitive comprehension of the state of erraticity, the intermediate link between our incarnations, the purgatory in which the guilty spirit divests himself of his soiled garments in order to put on others, and in which the progressing spirit weaves with care the robe he will have to wear, and which he desires to keep clean for the next stage

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of his journey. As I have already told you, I had an intuitive comprehension of all this, and, without professing Spiritism, I constantly practiced it.

Remark. – These three communications were obtained by three different mediums entirely unknown to one another. From the similarity of the thoughts expressed in them and of their style, we may fairly admit the strong probability of their having been dictated by the illustrious thinker whose name they bear. The expression, “*weaves with care the robe that he will have to wear*,” is a charming figure that well depicts the solicitude with which the advancing spirit prepares, beforehand, the conditions of the new existence that is to lead him yet farther on his upward way. Backward spirits take fewer precautions for their return to the earthly life, and they consequently make, too often, an unfortunate choice of their new trial, and have to begin that trial over again.

ANTOINE COSTEAU

Member of the Spiritist Society of Paris buried September 12th, 1863, in the Cemetery of Montmartre, in the Paupers’ Grave.⁶⁸ He was a thoroughly good-hearted person, who had been brought to the love of God and a man through Spiritism, and whose belief in a future life was entire, sincere, and profound. A mere pavior worker, he practiced charity in thought, word, and deed, to the utmost of his slender means; and, little as he possessed, he always contrived to assist those who had still less than himself. If the Spiritist Society abstained from purchasing a separate grave for him, it was simply because there were other and more pressing demands on resources which it was deemed better to employ in assisting the living, rather than in providing a sterile compliment for the dead; for all spiritist know that the “Paupers’ Grave” is a gate that leads as directly to a happier world as does the most costly mausoleum.

Mr. Canu, Secretary of the Society, formerly a thorough materialist, made the following address at the grave:

“Dear brother Costeau! But a few years ago, many of us – and, I confess, myself especially – would have seen, in this open grave, only the end of human troubles, and, beyond it, *nothing*, hideous annihilation; that is to say, no soul to reap either reward or punishment, and, consequently, no God to reward, to punish, or to pardon. Today, thanks to our divine doctrine, we see in it the end of a trial, and, for you, dear brother, whose mortal remains we now give back to the Earth, the triumph of your efforts and the beginning of the reward you have so nobly earned by your courage, your resignation, your charity, in a word, by your many virtues, and, above all, the glorification of a wise, all-powerful, just, and merciful God. Offer, for us, dear brother, our grateful acknowledgments to the Eternal, who has mercifully dissipated the darkness of error and incredulity in which we were enveloped; for, but a short time ago, we should have said to you, on this occasion, with bowed heads and despairing hearts, ‘Farewell, friend; farewell, *forever!*’ Whereas, today, we say to you, with heads erect in the sunshine of confidence and hope, and hearts filled with courage and with love, ‘Dear brother, may the blessing of the Almighty be with you until we meet again! Be happy, brother, and pray for us!’”⁶⁹

One of the mediums of the Society obtained, after the delivery of the preceding address, by the side of the open grave, the following communication, to the reading of which every one present, including the grave-diggers themselves, listened with uncovered head and deep emotion. It was, in truth, to most of them, a new and startling experience to hear the words uttered by a dead man at the grave of his body.

⁶⁸ A corner of all French burial-places, called *La fosse commune*, is always reserved for the gratuitous internment of those whose family is too poor to purchase a separate grave for their deceased relatives. – TR.

⁶⁹ For further details and additional speeches refer to the *Revue Spirite* of October 1863 page 297.

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“Thanks, Friends, thanks! My grave is not yet closed, but, a few moments hence, and the Earth will cover my mortal remains. But you well know that my soul will not be buried beneath this dust; it will mount aloft into space, rising towards God!

“And what a consolation is it to be able still to say, notwithstanding the bursting asunder of our mortal envelope; – ‘Oh, no; I am not dead! I am living with the true life, the eternal life!’

“The funeral of the poor is not followed by the crowd; no vainglorious display takes place at his grave; and yet, friends, believe me, *an immense crowd is gathered about you*, for good spirits have accompanied, to this humble resting place, the body enclosed in the coffin that lies here before you. For you all believe in God and adore His goodness.

“Oh, most certainly, we do not die, my beloved wife, because our body breaks down! Henceforth I shall always be near you, to console you, and to aid you in bearing the trial of my departure. Life will be hard for you; but, with your heart filled with the idea of eternity and the love of our Creator, of how little account will life’s sorrows appear to you!

“Relatives, who surround the dearly-loved companion of my life, give her your affection and respect; be for her so many brothers and sisters. Do not forget that you must give to one another assistance in the earthly life, if you would enter into the peace of the spirit-world!

“And you, spiritists, friends, brothers, thanks for coming to bid me farewell in this abode of dust and of mud; you know that my soul is immortal, that it still lives, and that it will often come to ask for your prayers, which you will not refuse to me, to aid me to go forward in the magnificent road that you have opened to me during my earthly life.”

“Farewell, all you who are present here; we shall meet elsewhere than beside this grave! Happy spirits are calling to me to come away with them! Farewell! Pray for all who suffer!”

COSTEAU

Three days afterwards, the spirit of Mr. Costeau, evoked in a private circle, dictated the following, through the intermediary of another medium:

“Death is life; I am only repeating what has already been said; but, for you, there is nothing else to be said, no matter what may be the denials of the materialists, who are bent on remaining blind. Oh, friends! What a glorious sight is the unfolding of the spiritist banner on your Earth! Herald the vast revelation of which you have, as of yet, but the faint beginnings, what splendid brightness does it bring to those who are willing to be enlightened, to those who have broken the chains of pride, and dare to proclaim, boldly, their belief in God! Pray, dear brothers, thank God for all the blessings that we are provided by Him. Poor human race! If it were given thee to comprehend! But no; the time has not yet come when the mercy of the Almighty is to be spread abroad upon all men, that they may understand the divine will, and submit to its orderings!

“It is with the aid of thy luminous rays, O Science of Sciences! that men will arrive at this understanding; it is at thy divine fire that they will warm their hearts and rekindle the consoling flame of faith and hope; it is through the beneficent influence of thy revelations that the master and the workman will be brought into brotherly sympathy and union; for it is through thine explanations of human life that they will comprehend the fraternal charity preached by the Divine Messiah.

“Reflect, O my brothers! On the immense happiness which has been granted to you, by your having been the first to be initiated into the work of regeneration. Honor to you, friends! Continue your labors, and like me, one day, on coming into the land of spirits, you will say: – *Death is life*; or, rather, it is a dream, a sort of nightmare that lasts the space of a minute, and from which you emerge to see yourself surrounded by friends who facilitate you on your arrival and hold out to you welcoming arms. My happiness was so great that I could not believe God would have granted me so many favors for the little I had done upon the Earth. I seemed to myself to be dreaming, and as it had sometimes happened to me to dream that I was dead, I was afraid, for a few moments, that I might be obliged to go back to the wretched body I had quitted but I soon came to perceive how it really was with me, and

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I blessed the sovereign Master who had enabled me to discharge, upon the Earth, the duties incumbent on him who desires to prepare for a future life. Yes, indeed; I blessed and thanked God for this great blessing: for *The Spirits' Book* had awakened in my soul the sentiment of love for my Creator.

“Thanks, friends, for having attracted me to you. Tell our brothers and sisters that I am often with our friend Sanson. Courage! The victory is assured to our doctrine! Happy will be those who have taken part in the combat!”

Mr. Costeau has frequently manifested himself since the giving of this message, both at the meetings of the Society and elsewhere; and he has always given proof of the elevation of thought that is the distinguishing characteristic of advanced spirits.

MADemoiselle EMMA⁷⁰

A lovely and charming young girl who died from the effects of an accident caused by fire, after excruciating suffering. One of the members of the Society had conceived the desire of evoking her at a meeting of the Spiritist Society of Paris, when she spontaneously presented herself July 31st, 1863, a short time after her death.

“Here I am again, on the stage of the world, I who thought myself buried forever, wrapped in my veil of youth and innocence! ‘The fire of Earth will save me from the fire of Hell,’ I said to myself, according to my Catholic belief; and although I did not venture to hope for the splendors of Paradise, my soul, amidst the horrible sufferings I underwent from my accident, took refuge in the thought that I was bearing, beforehand, the expiations of Purgatory, and I prayed, suffered, and wept, with patience and resignation. But who gave to my weakness the strength to bear such anguish? Who, in my long nights of sleepless and feverish torture, bent over the couch on which I underwent my martyrdom? Who cooled my parched lips? It was you, my Guardian Angel! You, whose shining whiteness enveloped me in blessing; it was you, also, dear Spirit-Friends, who came about me, murmuring in my ear your gentle words of hope and love!

“The flame which consumed my slight earthly body burnt away from my soul all sense of attachment to *the things that pass*; thus, *when I died, I was already living the true life of the soul*. I felt nothing of the confusion that usually accompanies dissolution, and I entered at once, serene and self-conscious, into the radiant daylight that surrounds those who, amidst suffering and trial, have held fast their confidence and hope. The thought of my mother, my beloved mother! Was the last terrestrial image that vibrated in my soul. How much I wish she might become a spiritist!

“I dropped from the tree of the earthly life like a fruit ripened before its time. I had scarcely felt the touch of the demon of vanity so fatal to those who allow themselves to be carried away by the glitter of success and the intoxications of youth and beauty! I bless the flame; I bless my sufferings; *I bless the trial that was an expiation*. Like the filmy gossamer-threads of autumn, I float, as light and as shining as they, borne upon the luminous currents of the ether around me; and the jewels that adorn my brow are no longer composed of the inert diamonds of your lower sphere, but are the splendid and living scintillations of the purified soul.”

EMMA

In the spiritist center at Havre, the same spirit also gave, spontaneously, the following communication, on the 30th July, 1863:

“Those who suffer upon the Earth are rewarded in the other life; for God is all justice and

⁷⁰ The adopted daughter and pupil of Madame Taglioni, Mademoiselle Emma Livry, who died in Paris, in 1863, of the injuries received from the igniting of her dress, when performing on the stage of the French Opera. – TR.

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mercy for those who suffer on Earth. The happiness granted to them in the spirit-world is so pure, their felicity is so perfect, that none would shrink from suffering or from death, if it were possible for them to penetrate the designs of the Creator! The Earth is the scene of trials that are often very severe, of sorrows that are often terribly keen; but let those who are thus tried be resigned to the infliction; let them bow before the will of God if, in His mercy, He calls them to bear a heavy load! When He summons them back to Himself after great suffering, they will see, in this other life, how small a matter they were, those pains and troubles of the earthly life, in comparison with the reward which is reserved for them, if no complaint, no murmuring, have found access to their heart! Very young have I quitted the Earth; God has forgiven me,⁷¹ and has granted me the life of those who have respected His ordination. Adore God in all things; love Him with all your heart; and, above all, pray to Him with unwavering confidence; for prayer is your true support in your lower life, your hope, your safety.⁷²

EMMA

DR. VIGNAL

One of the early members of the Spiritist Society of Paris, who died March 27th, 1865. The day before his funeral, a somnambulist, who is very lucid and sees spirits very clearly, having been requested to go to him and to state what he saw, replied as follows:

“I see a corpse in which a most wonderful work is taking place; there is a mass, of which every atom is in motion, and from which something seems to be trying to detach itself, but has hard work in overcoming the resistance opposed to its efforts by the mass with which it is connected. I cannot distinguish any clearly-defined spirit-form.”

The Paris Society evoked him on the 31st of March.

Q. Dear Dr. Vignal, all your old colleagues of the Society of Paris in general, and I in particular, have the kindest remembrance of you; and we shall be very much pleased if you can, and will, come and converse with us.

A. Dear Friends and you my dear and worthy Teacher, your remembrance and sympathy are very pleasant to me. If I am able to come to you today, and to take part, free of corporeal fetters, in this meeting of our spiritist friends, it is thanks to your kindly thought of me and the assistance brought to me by your prayers. As my young secretary remarked just now, I have been so impatient to communicate with you, all through the evening, that I have had to exercise much self-control in abstaining from giving the reins to this desire, although the questions you have been discussing have greatly interested me and have rendered the delay less tiresome. Forgive this impatience, dear Friends; but my gratitude would fain have manifested itself at once!

Q. Be good enough to tell us how you find yourself in the spirit-world. Describe to us the process of separation and your sensations at the moment when it took place; and tell us also how long it was before you regained your consciousness.

A. I am happy to tell you that my experience has fully confirmed the teachings of our luminous and consoling doctrine. I am happy! Yes I am, because now, without any obstacle, I can see develop before me the future of Science and the Spiritist Philosophy.

However, let us discard for today these inopportune digressions. I will return at another opportunity to speak to you on these subjects, knowing that my presence will be of such a pleasure, as I also feel when visit you.

⁷¹ A reference, probably, to the crime of an anterior life of which her painful departure was stated by her, in the preceding message, to have been an expiation. – TR.

⁷² “Prayer is the most powerful of magnetizations,” was the explanation of the action of prayer given to the translator by the involuntary writing. – TR.

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The wrenching asunder, in my case, was quickly accomplished; more quickly than I could have hoped for, seeing how slight my merits are. I was greatly aided in this effort by your prayers; and your somnambulist has given you so correct a description of the phenomena of the separation that I have little to add in regard to it. It was a sort of fitful oscillation, a kind of drawing, in two opposite directions; the spirit triumphed at last; for here I am! I only succeeded in freeing myself entirely from my body, at the moment when the latter was lowered into the grave; and I came back with you.

Q. What do you think of the funeral ceremonies that have occurred?

A. I have considered it to be an obligation to attend to them. At that moment, were you sufficiently separated from your body in order to observe them? **The prayers that I pronounced with the intent of being of help, (not out loud, logically), did they reach you?** I came back from the cemetery with you all, leaving behind me my old chrysalis completely disjoined from me. You know that I did not care much for the things of the Earth; I thought mainly of my spirit being and of God.

Q. Do you remember that, at your own request, five years ago, in the month of February 1860, we took you, you being alive, as the subject of an experiment?⁷³ At that time, your spirit disengaged itself from your body, and came and conversed with us. Will you have the kindness to define for us, as nearly as you can, the difference between your present disengagement and that which you effected at the time referred to?

A. Most certainly, I remember that experiment; but what a difference is there between my state on that occasion and my present state! At that time, the rigid network of matter held me in; I longed to detach myself more completely from my body, but was unable to do so. Now, I am altogether free; a vast field, that of the unknown, opens before me; and I hope that with your help and that of the good Spirits, to which I command myself, to advance and to instill, as soon as possible, the sentiments that we should possess, and the actions that we must practice in order to transpose the narrow path of the trials and be worthy of the world of compensations. What majesty! What grandeur! It is a sentiment almost of awe that takes possession of us, when, weak as we are, we try to fix our eyes on the sublime splendors before us!

Q. Once again I say that we will be very satisfied in being able to continue this conversation, when you feel that you wish to be with us.

A. I have done my best to reply to your questions; but do not ask too much, at first, of your faithful disciple! I am not yet entirely free of earthly influences. I should be delighted to go on talking with you; but my guide tries to moderate my enthusiasm, and I am too well convinced of his wisdom and kindness not to follow his counsel, however much I may regret having to break off this conversation. I feel comforted when I think that I will be able to return, incognito, to your spiritual reunions, often. I love you, and I shall come back to you; but now I give up my place to the other spirits, more advanced than myself, who have kindly allowed me to pour out the torrent of thoughts I was longing to utter.

I withdraw for the present; thanking you who have called me hither, and thanking also the spirit who has kindly allowed me to take his place, and who, when on Earth, bore the illustrious name of Pascal.

He who was, and will always be, the most devoted of your disciples.

DR. VIGNAL

VICTOR LEBUFLE

A young wharf-porter, worker of the port of Havre, deceased at the age of twenty years. He lived with his mother, who kept a poor little shop, lavishing upon her the most tender and affectionate

⁷³ Vide: "Revue Spirite" of March 1860.

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care, and supporting her with the slender gains of his hard and laborious work. He was never seen to enter a wine-shop or to take part in any of the excesses so common in his profession; for he would never take the least part from his earnings, wholly consecrated as they were to the assistance of his mother. Every moment of his time that was not taken up by his regular work was employed by him in helping her and in saving her fatigue. Attacked, long before, with a disease that he knew must be fatal, he hid his sufferings from his mother, fearing that, if she understood his state of health, she would be uneasy about him and would do, for herself, the work he always did for her. That so young a man should have constantly resisted the pernicious examples and temptations of the surroundings amidst which he lived, shows him to have possessed a very large stock of good qualities and a very strong force of will. He was sincerely pious; and his death was most calm and beautiful.

The night before he died, he insisted on his mother's taking a little rest, saying that he himself felt sleepy. The mother, during her short rest, had a vision. She found herself, she said, in the hold of a great ship, in total darkness; presently, she saw a speck of light that increased, in size and brilliance, until the hold was completely illuminated with a splendid radiance, in the midst of which she saw her son, looking wonderfully handsome and happy, and floating upwards into the air. She understood the vision as a sign that his end was near; and in fact, his noble spirit quitted the Earth on the following day, while his lips were yet breathing forth a prayer.

A spiritist family who knew of his exemplary life and took a warm interest in his poor mother – left, by his death, alone in the world – had intended to evoke him, shortly after his death; but he came to them spontaneously and dictated the following communication:

“You wish to know how it is with me now; I am happy, oh, wonderfully happy! You should look upon suffering and distress as something not to be regretted, for they are the source of blessings and of happiness beyond the grave. *Happiness!* You cannot understand what that word means! The happiness of the Earth is so far from what we feel. When we return towards the Master with a clear conscience, with the confidence of the servant who has faithfully done his duty, and who joyfully awaits approbation of Him who is all in all!

“Oh, Friends! life is painful and difficult, if you do not look beyond its end; but I tell you, truly, when you come among us, if you have lived according to the law of God, you will be awarded far beyond your sufferings and any claim that you may think your merits may have won for you! Be kind, be charitable, with the charity that is unknown to too many upon the Earth, and that is called *benevolence*. Be helpful to your fellow beings; do for them even more than you would wish them to do for you; for you know your own miseries, but you do not know what they may be suffering in silence. Be kind to my mother, my poor mother, my sole regret in leaving Earth! She has other trials still to undergo, for she has to win her way to Heaven. Farewell, I am going to her.”

VICTOR.

The Mediums' Guide – The sufferings endured in a terrestrial incarnation are not always a punishment. The spirits who, by the Divine ordering come to accomplish a mission upon the Earth, like him who has just communicated with you, endure, voluntarily, the sorrows that in other cases are an expiation. Sleep enables them to return, for the regaining of fresh vigor, to the presence of the Almighty,⁷⁴ and gives them the strength to bear all things for the glory of His name. The mission of this spirit, in his last existence, was not a brilliant one; but, though it was obscure, it was all the more meritorious, being devoid of everything that could help to sustain his courage by appealing to the sentiment of pride. He had, in the first place, a duty to discharge towards the spirit who was his mother; he had, in the second place, to show that amidst the very worst surroundings souls may remain pure and be filled with noble and elevated sentiments, and that a resolute will may resist every sort of temptation to evil. Such a life is a proof that a man's qualities have a cause anterior to his present

⁷⁴ Vide “*The Spirits' Book*,” Book Second, chap. VIII; *Emancipation of the soul*; *The Mediums' Book*, Part Second, chap. VII.

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existence; and such an example as that which has been set by the spirit of him with whom you have been communicating with will not be sterile.

MADAME ANAIS GOURDON

A very young woman, remarkable for her sweetness of temper and her eminent moral qualities, died in November 1860. She belonged to a family of miners, employed in the coal mines near St. Etienne, a circumstance that has to be borne in mind in estimating her position as a spirit.

(Evocation.) – Here I am.

Q. Your husband and father have requested us to evoke you; they will be very glad to receive a communication from you.

A. I am glad to give it as they will be to receive it.

Q. Why were you taken away, so young, from your family?

A. Because I had completed my terrestrial trial.

Q. Do you sometimes go and to see them?

A. I am very often with them.

Q. Are you happy as a spirit?

A. I am very happy. I have confidence, I wait and I love. The spirit-world has no terrors for me, and I wait, with love and confidence, for the budding of my white wings.

Q. What do you mean by “wings”?

A. I mean to become a fully purified and resplendent spirit, like the celestial messengers whose brightness dazzles me when I obtain a sight of them.

Remark – The “wings” of angels, archangels, seraphim, that is to say, of the pure spirits, are evidently only an attribute imagined by men, to indicate the rapidity with which they transport themselves through space; for the ethereality of their nature enables them to dispense with anything like a support in moving from one point to another. They may, however, show themselves to men with such accessories, in order to conform to human notions in regard to them, just as other spirits take the appearance they had upon the Earth, to ensure recognition.

Q. Is there anything you would like to have done by your relatives?

A. I should like them, whom I love so dearly, to cease grieving me with the spectacle of their regret, since they know that I am not lost to them, and try to think of me with cheerfulness and hope, so that their remembrance of me may be light and fragrant in their hearts. I passed away from Earth like a flower; my rapid passage should leave behind it no trace of sadness.

Q. How is it that your language is so poetic, so little in keeping with the position you occupied upon the Earth?

A. It is because it is *my soul* that is speaking to you. I had acquired much in my previous incarnations. *Refined spirits are often made to incarnate themselves among the roughest people, in order to give them a glimmering of the refinements that they will acquire and understand at a later period of their existence.*

Without this explanation – so reasonable and so entirely in harmony with the solicitude of the Creator for His creatures – it would be impossible to account for the elegant and poetic expressions employed by the spirit of one who had been brought up in the midst of the most prosaic surroundings. This anomaly, and its opposite, are often met with in life, where we see spirits of evident advancement incarnated among persons every way inferior to them, and *vice versa*. It is an order to bring the backward spirit more quickly forward that they are incarnated among persons superior to them; as superior spirits are incarnated among inferior persons in order to aid the latter to advance; the contact

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with lower natures also serving as a useful trial for those who are more advanced. What other theory than that of our successive existences can solve the problems presented by these anomalies?

MAURICE GONTRAN

He was an only son, who died, at the age of eighteen, of tuberculosis. Gifted with rare intelligence, reasoning powers beyond his years, a great love of study, gentle, affectionate, sympathetic, he possessed all the qualities that give the fairest promise of a brilliant future. Having successfully finished his preliminary studies, he was diligently preparing for admission to the Polytechnic School. His death was a terrible blow to his parents, and was felt by them all the more acutely because, as his health had always been delicate, they attributed his premature decease to the assiduous study in which they had encouraged him to persevere, and they therefore reproached themselves bitterly with his loss, as though it had resulted from a crime on their part. "Of what use will all his studies be to him now?" They despondingly asked themselves; "It would have been far better had he remained ignorant, for he had no need of all this learning to make him live. If he had not studied so hard, he would doubtless be still with us, and he would have been the joy and the consolation of our old age!" Had they been spiritists, they would have reasoned otherwise. At a later period, they became acquainted with the spiritist theory of life and obtained from it the true and only consolation for such a loss. The following communication was made, by their son, to one of their friends, a few months after his death:

Q. My dear Maurice, I cannot doubt that your warm attachment to your parents will give you the desire to raise their spirits, if it is possible for you to do so. The grief, I may say, *the despair*, in which they have been plunged by your death, has impaired their health and has made them take disgust to life. A few affectionate words from you may perhaps awaken hope in their hearts.

A. Dear old friend! I have been waiting impatiently for the opportunity you now offer me of communicating with them. My parents' grief distresses me; but it will be softened when they come to know that I am not lost to them. You must direct your efforts to convincing them of this certainty, and I foresee that you will succeed in doing so. They needed this event to lead them to a belief that will give them happiness, for it will prevent their murmuring against the decree of Providence. My father, as you know, is very skeptical in regard to a future life; *this affliction has been allowed from God to befall him in order to draw him out of his error.*

We shall meet again, in this other world in which we no longer undergo the sufferings of human life, and into which I have gone before them; but tell them the satisfaction of seeing me will be refused them, as a punishment, if they lack confidence in the goodness of God. Such a state of mind, on their part, would even lead to my being forbidden to hold communication with them, henceforth, through the rest of their earthly lives. Despair is a revolt against the will of the Almighty, and, as such, *is always punished by the prolongation of the cause that has produced this despair*, until the sufferer has submitted to the trial imposed upon him. Despair is a form of suicide, for it undermines the health of the body, and he who shortens his days, in the hope of escaping more quickly from the grip of his sorrow, prepares for himself a terrible disappointment; he ought, on the contrary, to do his best to keep up his bodily strength, in order that he may more easily bear the weight of his trials.

My beloved parents! It is to you that I now address myself. From the time when I quitted my mortal body, I never ceased to be near you, and I am with you more frequently than when I was upon the Earth. Be consoled, then, for I am not dead! I am more alive than you are; it is only my body that is dead, for my soul is still living! I am free, happy, out of reach of diseases, infirmities, and pain. Instead of being afflicted by my departure, you should rejoice to know that I am in a region exempt

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from cares and anxieties, and in which the heart is filled to overflowing with pure and unmixed happiness.

Ah, my friends! Lament not for those who die young! It is a favor granted by Providence to those who need no longer experience of the tribulations of life. My last existence upon the Earth was not intended to be prolonged any further; for I had acquired all that I had to acquire, as a preparation for a more important mission that I shall have to discharge in course of time. Had I remained longer upon the Earth, who knows whether I might not have been exposed to dangerous temptations? Who knows whether, not being as of yet sufficiently strong to resist the seductions of the worlds, I might not have succumbed to them and have thus delayed my advancement for hundreds of years? Why should those who loves me regret what is, for me, so great a blessing? An inconsolable grief, in such a case, implies a want of faith only reasonable on the part of those who believe in annihilation. Greatly, indeed, are they to be pitied who hold a belief so prolific of despair; for them, there is no possible consolation; the beings whom they love are lost to them forever; the grave has robbed them of their last hope!

Q. Was your death painful?

A. No, I only suffered before dying from the disease that carried me off; *but that suffering diminished as the last moments drew near*; then, one day, I fell asleep without any thought of death. I began to dream, such a delightful dream! I dreamt that I was cured; I felt no more pain; I breathed in, with the sound lungs and with inexpressible enjoyment, a fragrant and life-giving air! I felt myself transported through space by an unknown force; I was in the midst of light that dazzled me with its splendor and yet did not fatigue my sight. I saw my grandfather; his face was no longer thin and worn, but was fresh and youthful; he held out his arms to me and clasped me joyfully to his bosom. A crowd of people came with him, all smiling as they met me and welcoming me with kindness and satisfaction; I seemed to remember them, I was rejoiced to see them again, and we exchanged cordial greetings and expressions of friendship. Well! What I took to be a *dream* was a *reality*; I was never again to awaken upon the Earth; I had awakened in the spirit-world!

Q. Was your illness caused by excess of study?

A. No, be very sure that it was not. The length of time that I was to live upon the Earth had been marked out beforehand, and nothing could have kept me there any longer. My spirit, in its hours of disengagement,⁷⁵ was perfectly aware of this, and rejoiced in the knowledge of its approaching deliverance. But the time I passed upon the Earth was not unprofitable to me, and I now felicitate myself on not having wasted it. The studies, which I followed up so thoroughly, have strengthened my soul and increased my knowledge; it is so much gained; and if I have not been able to turn this knowledge to practical account during my short stay among you, I shall do so, still more efficiently, in a future existence.

Farewell, dear friend; I am going to visit my parents, to try to prepare them for receiving this communication.

MAURICE

⁷⁵ That is to say, during the sleep of the body. – TR.

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Chapter III

SPIRITS IN A MIDDLE CONDITION

JOSEPH BRÊ

Died in 1840; evoked at Bordeaux, in 1862, by his granddaughter.

Uprightness in the sight of God, and uprightnes according to the judgment of men.

1. Dear grandfather, will you tell me how you are situated in the spirit-world, and give me such details concerning your present life as may be useful for our advancement?

A. Most willingly, my dear child. I am expiating my want of faith; but the mercy of God is great, and makes allowance for circumstances. I suffer; not as you understand suffering, but from regret that I did not make a better use of my time upon the Earth.

2. How can you say that you did not make a good use of it? You always lived the life of an upright man.

A. Yes, as men judge of uprightnes; but there is an abyss between *what passes for uprightnes among men, and the uprightnes that is approved as such by God*. I will try, for your instruction, to make you understand the difference between them.

Among you, a man is looked upon as upright if he respects the laws of his country (although this respect is, with many, extremely elastic), and if he abstains from robbing his neighbor of his property, although he may rob him of his honor, of his happiness, provided the vile hypocrite does so in ways that escape the action of the law and of public opinion. Once the long list of praises and apparent virtues are engraved on the flat stone, they believe that they have paid their debt to humanity. What a mistake! To be upright in the sight of Heaven, it is not enough to have abstained from transgressing the laws of men; it is necessary, above all, not to have transgressed the laws of God!

The upright man in the sight of God is he who, filled with devotion and charity, spends his life in doing good, in helping forward the progress of his fellow-creatures; he who, being animated with a zeal that is kindled by the foresight of the end to be obtained, is perpetually active in all the business of life; active in fulfilling the duties imposed upon him by his worldly position, for he should inculcate the love of labor among his brother; active in every good work, for he must not forget that he is a servant of whom the Master will by-and-by demand an account of the way in which he has spent his life, inculcating by his example the love of God and of the neighbor. He who would be upright in the sight of God must carefully avoid cutting remarks, the insidious suggestions, which destroy reputations and ruin positions, by dishonoring their victims or by making them objects of ridicule. The heart of the man who would be judged upright by God must be free from the least taint of pride, envy, and ambition. He must be patient and gentle with those who attack him; he must forgive, from the bottom of his heart, without effort and without ostentation, all those who have wronged him; he must love the Creator in all His creatures; he must, in short, put in practice the summary of human duties – so concise and yet so complete! – “*Thou shalt love God above all things and thy neighbor as thyself.*”

Such, dear granddaughter, is an imperfect outline of what constitutes uprightnes in the sight of God. I ask you; candidly, *did I fulfill all these conditions?* No, I was very far from doing so; I confess the fact without hesitation. I was not active in all good works, as I ought to have been; my forgetfulness of God led me into other sorts of forgetfulness which, though not punishable by human laws, are nonetheless offences against the law of God. I suffered much when I came to perceive this fact; and therefore I am able now to hope, with the consoling hope that is born of faith in the mercy of God, who sees my repentance. Tell this to others, my dear child; repeat it to all those whose conscience is burdened. Let them atone for past remissness by doing good to the very utmost of their power; and the Divine pity will accept their expiations and wipe out the memory of their faults.

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MRS. HÉLÈN MICHEL

She died suddenly, in her home, at the age of twenty-five, without pain, from some cause not ascertainable by science. She was rich, rather frivolous, and, owing to the frivolity of her disposition, more intent on the trifles of life than on more serious matters; yet, notwithstanding this defect, she was good-hearted, gentle, benevolent, and charitable.

Evoked, three days after her death, by people who had known her, she expressed herself as follows: –

“I don’t know where I am!...What a state of confusion I am in!...You have called me, and I come...but I cannot understand why I am not in my home. They are weeping for my absence, and yet I am among them, but I cannot make any of them see me! My body no longer belongs to me, and yet I feel it cold and icy. I try to get away from it, and I am riveted to it, I keep coming back to it. I am two persons...Oh, when shall I be able to understand what has happened to me? I must go there! My other ME, what would become of it, if I stayed away?...Farewell!”

The feeling of duality, which has not yet been destroyed by complete separation, is very evident here. Her naturally frivolous disposition had been rendered still more frivolous by her wealth, which had enabled her to gratify her caprices. It is therefore not strange that the separation, in her case, should have been slow, and that, three days after her death, she should still feel herself linked to her physical body. But, as she had no vice and was overall a good woman her situation was not a very painful one and did not last long. Evoked again, a few days later, her ideas were found to have changed very considerably. Here is what she said: –

“Thank you for praying for me. I recognize the goodness of God in sparing me all suffering and apprehension at the moment of the separation of my body and soul. My poor mother will find it very difficult to be resigned to my loss; but she will be sustained, and what, to her eyes, appears as a terrible misfortune, was indispensable to her good, in order that the things of the other life might be seen by her in their true light, as *the only things of real worth*. I shall be near her until the end of her earthly trial, and I shall help her to bear it. I am not unhappy; but I have still much to do in order to raise myself towards the sojourn of the blessed. I shall pray to be permitted to return upon this Earth, for I shall have to make up for the time I wasted in my last existence. Let your faith sustain you, my friends; have confidence in the efficacy of prayer, when it comes really from the heart: God is kind.”

Q. Were you long in recovering your consciousness?

A. I understood that I was dead, the day you prayed for me.

Q. Was your state of confusion a painful one?

A. No, I did not suffer, I thought I was dreaming, and I expected to awaken. My life was not exempt from pain; all who are incarnated on Earth must suffer: I was resigned to the will of God, and He has counted it in my favor. I am grateful to you for the prayers that helped me to regain consciousness. Thanks; I shall always come to you with pleasure. Farewell.

HÉLÈNE”

THE MARQUIS OF SAINT-PAUL

Died in 1860, evoked, at the request of his sister, a member of the Paris Society, the 16th May, 1861

1. (*Evocation.*) – A. Here I am.

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2. Your sister has asked us to evoke you; although a medium, she is not sufficiently developed to have confidence in herself.

A. I will do my best to reply to you.

3. She wishes, in the first place, to know whether you are happy.

A. I am in erraticity; and that state is neither very happy nor very unhappy.

3. Were you long in recovering consciousness?

A. I remained for a considerable time in the state of confusion; and I only emerged from it to bless the charity of those who had not forgotten me, and who had prayed for me.

Q. Can you say how long the confusion lasted in your case?

A. No.

5. Who were the spirits first recognized by you?

A. My father and mother both of whom received me on my waking and initiated me into the new life.

6. How was it that, at the end of your illness, you seemed to be conversing with those whom you had most loved during your life?

A. The world I was about to enter was revealed to me before my death. I became clairvoyant before I died; but my spirit-sight was clouded at the moment of my definitive separation from the body, because the links between my body and soul were still very vigorous.

7. Why were your remembrances mainly those of your childhood?

A. Because the beginning of a life is nearer to its end than is the middle of it.

Q. What do you mean by that statement?

A. I mean that the dying recall, and see, *in a sort of consoling mirage*, the innocent years of their childhood.

It is probably through a Providential ordaining of a similar nature that the old, as they near the end of their life, regain so clear a remembrance of the smallest details of their early days.

8. Why, in speaking of your body, did you always allude to it in the third person?

A. Because, being clairvoyant, as I told you just now, I had a clear perception of the duality of my physical and moral being; the difference between these, though lost sight of by us while they are united by the vital fluid, is distinctly visible for those who, in dying, become clairvoyant.

The perception of duality, here alluded to, was very marked in the case of this gentleman. In his last moments, he invariably said: – “He is thirsty; give him something to drink.” “He is cold, warm him.” “He is suffering in such and such a part,” and so on. And when those about him remarked, “But it is *you* who are thirsty,” or “It is *you* who want something warm,” etc., he always replied, “No, it is *he*.” In this case, the two existences were clearly defined. The thinking *me* is in the spirit and not in the body; the spirit, already partly disengaged from the body, saw the latter as another individual, as something that was not really *himself*; and consequently it was not to *him*, the spirit, but to his body, that drink was to be given. This same perception of the duality of the soul and body is frequently manifested by somnambulists.

9. What you have said of being in erraticity, and of the prolongation of your state of confusion, would seem to imply that you are not happy; yet your many excellent qualities would have led us to infer the contrary. It is true that, among errant spirits, some are happy, while others are unhappy.

A. I am in a state of transition; what are considered as virtues among men, are appraised, in this world, at their true value. My present state is a thousand times preferable to that of terrestrial incarnation; but I have always aspired after the highest truth and the highest beauty my soul will not be satiated until it has reached the feet of the Creator.

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DR. CARDON

Dr. Cardon had passed a good many years on board of a whaling-vessel, to which he was attached in his medical capacity; and he had acquired, in that rough and adventurous existence, ideas and habits savoring strongly of terrestriality. Having retired from the seafaring life, he settled in the village of J...., where he exercised the modest profession of a country doctor. In course of time, he became aware that he was attacked with hypertrophy of the heart; knowing this disease to be incurable, the idea of death preyed upon his mind and plunged him into a state of gloomy depression from which nothing could rouse him. Two months before he died, he predicted the day of his death; and, when that day arrived, he called all his family around him to bid him farewell. His wife, his mother, his three children, and a few other relatives, were all assembled at his bedside. At the moment when his wife attempted to raise him from his pillow, he sank on one side, his face became blue and livid, his eyes closed, and he appeared to be dead; his wife placed herself before him, to hide the painful spectacle from their children. But, in the course of a few minutes, he opened his eyes; his face became illuminated, so to say, with an expression of radiant beatitude, and he exclaimed: "Oh, my children, how beautiful it is! How sublime! Oh, death! What a blessing! What a delight! I was dead; and I felt my soul rising up very high; but I am permitted to come back to say to you, '*Have no fear of death; death is deliverance.*' Would that I could depict for you the magnificence that I have seen and the impressions with which I was pervaded! But you could not understand them. ...Oh, my children! Conduct yourselves always in such a way as to deserve this ineffable felicity, reserved for those who have become good; conform your lives to the dictates of charity; of whatever you possess, give a part to those who are in want...My dear wife! I leave you in a position that is far from what I could have wished. A good deal of money is owing to us, but I entreat of you, do not worry those who owe it. Many of them are straitened, themselves; wait until they are able to pay, and, in the case of those who cannot do so, make the sacrifice of the claim; God will reward you! You, my son, must work hard to support your mother; be always honest and upright! And take care to do nothing that could dishonor our family. Take this cross, which was my mother's; never lay it aside; and may it always remind you of my last words to you...My children! Aid and sustain one another. Let there be always harmony between you. Be neither vain, nor proud. Forgive your enemies, if you would obtain forgiveness from God..."Then, having signed to his children to come closer to him, he extended his hands towards them, saying: "My children! I give you my blessing!" As he uttered these words, his eyes closed again; and, this time, it was forever. But his face preserved an expression so imposingly beautiful that, up to the moment of his funeral, crowds of people came to see the corpse, contemplating it with admiration.

These interesting details having been communicated to us by a friend of the family, we thought that an evocation of the deceased might be instructive for us, as well as useful to the spirit himself.

1. (*Evocation.*) – A. I am near you.

2. **We have been informed of the circumstances attending your death and we have been greatly interested by those details. Will you have the kindness to describe to us, as fully as may be, what you saw in the interval between what may be called your two deaths?**

A. What I saw, could you comprehend? I know not; but I could not find words capable of rendering comprehensible, for you, what I beheld in the few moments during which it was possible for me to quit my mortal envelope.

3. **Can you tell where you went? Was it far from the Earth? Was it in some other planet? Or was it in space?**

A. The spirit does not measure distances as you do. Carried away by some wonderful current, I beheld the splendors of a sky such as not the most ecstatic dream could foreshadow. This journey through infinity was accomplished so rapidly that I cannot tell how many moments were thus employed by my spirit.

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4. Are you now in the enjoyment of all the happiness of which you obtained a glimpse?

A. No, I should be rejoiced indeed if such were my present lot; but God could not grant me a reward so far above my merits. I rebelled too often against the wise suggestions made to my mind, for death seemed to me to be an injustice. A skeptical physician, I had imbibed, from the exercise of the healing art, an aversion for the idea of the second nature which is our intelligent and divinely-given motor; I regarded the immortality of the soul as a fiction fit for minds of little elevation; nevertheless, the prospect of annihilation filled me with horror, for the mysterious agent, that I had so often cursed, continued to knock at the door of my heart. But the vain philosophy, to which I had accorded my confidence, had failed to show me the greatness of the Eternal, whose wisdom distributes joy and sorrow for the improvement of mankind.

5. When your death had really occurred, did you recover your consciousness immediately?

A. I had recovered my consciousness during the transition undergone by my soul in order to visit the ethereal regions; but, after my real death, it was several days before I awakened to consciousness.

God had granted me a favor; I will tell you why.

My former incredulity no longer existed; I had begun to believe, before my death; for, after having scientifically probed the dangerous illness which was killing me, I could assign no other reason for it than the decree of a power superior to nature; this conviction had inspired and consoled me, and had given me a courage that was stronger than my suffering. I blessed what I had formerly cursed; the end, which was approaching, appeared to me as deliverance. The thought of God is as vast as the universe! Ah! What admirable consolation do we find in the ineffable influences of prayer! The instinct of prayer is the surest element of our immaterial nature. Through prayer I had comprehended; I had arrived at a firm, unwavering conviction; and it was for this reason that God, weighing my actions, granted me this reward before the end of my incarnation.

6. Would it be correct to say that, during your absence from your body, you were already dead?

A. Yes, and no; the spirit having left the body, the life of the flesh was necessarily becoming extinguished; but, when I again took possession of my terrestrial dwelling, life came back to the body, which had undergone a transition, a sleep.

7. Did you, at that moment, feel the links that connected you with your body?

A. Undoubtedly; those links are hard to break; the spirit has to wait for the last shudder of the flesh, before he can return to his normal life.

8. How was it that, at the time of your apparent death and for some minutes afterwards, your spirit was able to disengage itself instantaneously and without confusion, while your real death was followed by a period of confusion extending over several days? It would have seemed that, in the former case, as the links between the soul and the body were stronger than in the latter, your disengagement ought to have been slower; yet it is the contrary that occurred.

A. You have often evoked incarnate spirits, and you have received replies that were really made by them.⁷⁶ I was in the position of those spirits. God called me; His servants said, "Come!" I obeyed the call; and I thank God for the special favor accorded to me, and which enabled me to see and to understand the infinity of His greatness. I also thank the spirits who, before my real death, assisted me to give my last counsels to my children, and to urge them to goodness and rectitude during their present incarnation.

9. What prompted those good and beautiful counsels that, on returning to the earthly life, you addressed to your family?

⁷⁶ Vide "The Mediums' Book," Part Second, chap. xxv, *Evocation of Living Persons*.

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A. They were the reflexes of what I had seen and heard during my absence from the body. My spirit-friends inspired my voice and influenced my countenance.

10. What impression do you believe your statements made upon your family and your children in particular?

A. They were all profoundly affected by them. The assertions of a dying man cannot be suspected of deceit; and his children, even the most ungrateful, respect the voice of the parent who is passing away. If you could scrutinize the hearts of children, beside the open grave of a parent, you would see that they are only moved, at such a moment, by true and worthy feelings, excited in their minds by the occult action of the good spirits about them, who say, in whispers addressed to their thought: – “Tremble, if you have not a clear conscience. Death is either a reward, or a punishment; for God is just!” I can assure you that, notwithstanding the incredulity too general in the world, my family and my friends will retain their belief in the statements I made to them before I died. I was the mouthpiece of the other world.

11. You say that you are not yet in the enjoyment of all the happiness of which you had a foreglimpse; do you mean to say that you are unhappy?

A. No, for I believed before dying, sincerely and deeply. Pain, so hard to bear, in the earthly life, adds to our advancement in the spirit-world. The Divine Judge has taken account of my prayers and my entire confidence in His goodness; I am on the road to perfection, and I shall reach, in time, the goal of which I was permitted to obtain a foreglimpse. Pray, my Friends, for you thus render more operative your union with the beings of this other world who preside over the destinies of the Earth. Prayer is a force that brings the spirits of all worlds into communion with one another.

12. Would you like to send a few words to your wife and children?

A. I beseech all those who love me to believe in God, the all-powerful, just, unchangeable; in prayer, which consoles and relieves; in charity, which is the holiest product of human incarnation. Let them remember that even the poorest can find something to give, and that the mite of the poor is the most noble of all gifts in the sight of God, who knows that the poor man gives much in giving little, and that the rich man can only equal the charitableness of the poor man by giving very largely, and very often.

The happiness of the future is contained in charity, in universal benevolence, in the conviction that all men are brothers, in the absence of all selfishness and childish vanity.

My beloved family! You will have to undergo heavy trials; but draw courage, for bearing them, from the thought that God takes note of your resignation.

Repeat, often, this prayer: – God of love and of goodness, Eternal Giver! Give us the firmness so that we do not move back in front of any sorrow, make us kind, gentle, charitable; if we are but little, in point of fortune, make us great in the qualities of our hearts. May we be thoroughly pervaded by the truths of Spiritism during our earthly life, that so we may be better able to understand and to love Thee in the spirit-world. May Thy name, O God! emblem of freedom, be the consoling aim of all those who feel the need of loving, forgiving, and believing.

CARDON”

ERIC STANILAS

Spontaneous communication; Spiritist Society of Paris; August 1863:

“How much happiness do we derive from the communicative emotions of kindly hearts! Beautiful principles that open a path of salvation for all that lives, for all that breathes, physically and spiritually, may your balmy influences be largely spread abroad over the people of the Earth, and over

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us, in the spirit-world! What words, dear friends, could express the delight of your brothers beyond the grave, in witnessing the unselfish affection by which you are all united?

Ah! Brothers, of how much good, of how much elevated conviction, is your doctrine destined to sow the seed! And what a harvest of blessing will you reap, even for yourselves, from the good you will thus have accomplished!

I have been with you all the evening; I have listened, I have comprehended, and I shall now be able, in my turn, to do my duty in giving instructions to imperfect spirits in the other life.

Listen: – I was far from being happy; lost in the vastness of immensity, of infinity, my sufferings were all the more acute because I could not exactly understand their nature. God be thanked! His goodness has permitted me to enter a sanctuary that cannot be approached *with impunity* by the wicked. How grateful I feel to you, my friends! How much strength I have gained from you!

Meet often, you who are animated by hope and charity; for you cannot imagine how fruitful of good are the earnest and serious meetings that take place among you. Spirits who have still much to learn, those who have remained voluntarily inactive, idle, and forgetful of their duties, may be brought fortuitously, or otherwise, among you; struck by a terrible shock, they may be led (and this often happens) to fall back upon themselves, to perceive their own state, to see the aim which they have to attain, and, strengthened by the example which you set them, many seek the means of deliverance from the painful state in which they find themselves. I am very happy to serve as the spokesman of those suffering souls; for I am speaking to men who have hearts, and I know that I shall not be repelled by them.

Once more, then, O generous men! Let me assure you of my own personal gratitude, and that of all your friends in this other life, to whom you have done so much good that you have, perhaps, not been aware of.

ERIC STANISLAS”

The Medium’s Guide. – My children, the spirit, who has dictated the message you have just received was for a long time very unhappy, because he remained for a long time on the wrong road. He has now understood his mistake he has repented of his wrongdoing, and has, at length, turned towards God, from whom he had turned away. His position is not yet a happy one; but he aspires to happiness, and he no longer suffers. He is now permitted to come and listen to the instructions that are given to you by your spirit-friends; and he will soon be allowed to go into a lower sphere, in which he will instruct, and help forward, other spirits who, like him, have transgressed the laws of the Eternal; this is the reparation demanded of him. He will now be able to win happiness, because he has now the will to do so.

MADAME ANNA BELLEVILLE

She died at the age of thirty-five, after a long and very painful illness. Vivacious, witty, endowed with rare intelligence, of clear judgment, and high moral excellence, a devoted wife and mother, she also possessed uncommon strength of character, and a mind so fertile in resources that she was never at a loss to decide as to what was the best to be done in the most critical moments of her life. Without rancor for those of whom she had the most cause to complain, she was always ready to render service to them. Having been intimately acquainted with her for many years, we had followed with interest all the phases of her life and all the incidents of its close.

An accident led to the terrible disease that carried her off, after keeping her for three years confined to her bed, a prey to the most frightful sufferings, which she bore, to the last, with heroic courage, and in the midst of which her natural cheerfulness never abandoned her. She believed firmly in the existence of the soul and of the future life; but she did not think much about them; all her

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thoughts were concentrated on the present life, to which she was strongly attached, without, however, having any dread of death, and without caring for material enjoyments, but, on the contrary, living very simply, and easily doing without whatever she had not the means of procuring; but she had an instinctive taste for the commodious and the beautiful and she displayed this taste in the smallest details. She longed to live, less for herself than for her children, to whom she felt herself to be necessary; for their sake, she clung to life with extraordinary tenacity. She knew something of Spiritism, but without having made it a subject of study; she took a certain amount of interest in its postulates and yet it failed to give her a fixed basis of conviction concerning the future. She regarded it as being true, but it made no deep impression on her mind. The good that she did was prompted by a natural spontaneous tendency on her part, and not by any thought of the rewards and penalties of the future.

Her life had been, for a long time, despaired of, and those about her were prepared to witness her departure at any moment; she herself no longer cherished any illusion in regard to her state of health. One day, her husband being absent, she felt her strength leaving her, and understood that her hour had come; her sight became clouded, her mind became confused, and she experienced all the distress of the separation. But the idea of dying before her husband returned was very painful to her. Rousing all the energy she could muster, she said to herself, "*No, I will not die.*" As she formed this resolution, she felt her life coming back to her, and she recovered the full possession of her faculties. When her husband returned, she said to him, "I was dying, but I determined to wait until you came back to me, for I have still a good many things to say to you." This struggle between life and death was kept up by her for three months, which lapse of time was, in her case, only a prolonged and most painful dying.

(Evocation: the day after her death)

Thanks, dear friends, for thinking of me; but you have always been to me like parents. Rejoice with me, for I am happy. Assure my poor husband of this, and watch over my children. I went to them as soon as my deliverance had taken place.

Q. It would appear that the confusion has not lasted long in your case, since you reply to us with so much clearness.

A. You know how much I suffered, and that I bore my sufferings with resignation. My trial is ended. I cannot say that I am, as of yet, completely disengaged; but I no longer suffer, and this is for me such an immense relief! This time, I am, indeed, thoroughly cured; but I still need the help of your prayers, that I may be able, afterwards, to come and work with you.

Q. What could have been the cause of your long sufferings?

A. A terrible past.

Q. Can you tell us about that past?

A. Oh, let me forget it for a while; I have paid such a heavy price for it!

(A MONTH AFTER HER DEATH)

Q. As you must now be completely free and better able to describe your situation, we should be very glad to receive some more explicit statement from you. Can you tell us what was the cause of your prolonged death-agony? For you were, for three months, between life and death.

A. Thanks, dear friends, for your remembrance and your prayers! How much good they have done me, and how powerfully that contributed to my release! I still need to be supported; continue to pray for me. You understand what prayer should be! Your prayers are no commonplace forms, like those of so many who know nothing of the effect of a true prayer. My sufferings were great; but they

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are amply rewarded; and I am permitted to be often with my children, whom I quitted with so much regret!

I prolonged my sufferings by my own determined wish to live; my ardent desire to remain with my children caused me to cling to matter with the clutch of a drowning man; I stiffened myself in my determination and *I would not* abandon the unhappy body from which it was, nevertheless, necessary for me to tear myself away, and which was for me the instrument of such dreadful torture. Such was the true cause of my long death-struggle. My illness, and the sufferings I endured, was an expiation of the past, one more debt paid off and done with.

Ah, dear friends, if I had hearkened to you, how very different would be my present life! What consolation I should have had in my last moments, and how much easier this separation would have been to me, if, instead of opposing it, I had given myself up, confiding in the will of God, to the current that was carrying me away! But, instead of looking forward to the future that was awaiting me, I looked only to the present that I was quitting!

When I come back upon the Earth, I promise you I shall be a spiritist! What an immense unfolding! I often come to your meetings, to listen to the instructions that are given by you. If I could have understood all this while I was upon the Earth, my sufferings would have been greatly lessened; but my hour had not come. I now comprehend the goodness of God and His justice; but I am not yet sufficiently advanced not to still occupy myself with the things of the earthly life; my children, especially, draw me back to the Earth, no longer to spoil them, but to watch over them and to lead them to follow the road traced out by Spiritism. Yes, my friends; I have still serious anxieties; one especially, for my children's future depends on it.

Q. Can you tell us anything of the past that you deplore?

A. I am quite ready to make my confession! I had been, in a former life, indifferent to suffering, I had seen my mother suffer without feeling any pity for her; I treated her sufferings as only imaginary. As she was not obliged to keep her bed, I fancied that she did not really suffer, and I laughed at her misery. You see how Providence punishes!

(SIX MONTHS AFTER HER DEATH)

Q. Now that a tolerably long time has elapsed since you quitted your terrestrial envelope, be kind enough to depict to us your situation and your occupations in the spirit-world.

A. During my terrestrial life, I was what was considered, in a general way, *a good woman*; but I prized my own comfort above everything else. Although I was naturally compassionate, I am sure that I should have been capable of making any painful sacrifice to relieve another's misfortune. At present, all that is changed; I am still *me*, but the *me* of other days has undergone modifications. I have still made some gains; I see that there are no other differences of rank and condition, in the spirit-world, than those of personal merit, where the charitable, though poor, is above the haughty rich who humiliated him in giving him alms. I watch especially over those who are afflicted with family-troubles, the loss of relatives, or of fortune; my mission is to console and to encourage them, and I am happy in doing so.

ANNA"

An important question is suggested by the foregoing facts: can a human being, by an effort of the will, delay the definitive separation of the soul and the body?

Reply of the spirit of Saint Louis:

This question, if replied to in the affirmative and without restriction, might give rise to erroneous suppositions. An incarnated spirit may, under certain circumstances, prolong his corporeal existence in order to finish the giving of some directions which he considers to be absolutely

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necessary; he may be allowed to do so, as in the case referred to, and in many others. But this prolongation could only be, in any case, of short duration, for no man can be allowed to invert the order of nature, or to effect a real return to the earthly life, when the latter has reached its appointed term. Moreover, you must not infer, from the *possibility* of such an action, that it could be general, or that every individual would be able to prolong his own existence in this way. As a *trial for the spirit*, or in the interest of a mission to be accomplished, the worn-out organs may receive a supplement of vital fluid that allows of their adding a few instants to the corporeal manifestation of thought; but such cases are the exceptions and not the rule. You must regard such a momentary prolongation of life not as a derogation from the unchangeableness of the laws of God, but as a consequence of the freedom of the human soul, which, at the last moment, is conscious of the mission that has been imposed upon it, and would fain, in defiance of death, accomplish what it has not been able to finish. It may also be, in some cases, a punishment inflicted on a spirit who doubts the fact of a future life; such a prolonging of vitality bringing with it a prolongation of suffering.

SAINT LOUIS

Some surprise may be felt at the rapidity with which the disengagement of this spirit was effected, notwithstanding her attachment to the earthly life; but it must be remarked that this attachment was neither sensual nor material; it was even, in some sense, a virtuous feeling, for it was prompted by anxiety for the welfare of her children, who were very young. The lady in question, it must also be remembered, was a spirit of considerable advancement both in intelligence and in morality; one degree more and she would have been among the “happy spirits.” In her case, therefore, the perispiritual links had nothing of the tenacity which results from the spirit’s self-identification with material things; it may be said, moreover, that, her physical life being weakened by her long illness, her soul was only held to the body by a few threads; it was these threads that she tried to prevent from breaking. But she was punished for this resistance by the prolongation of her sufferings, which were due to the nature of her illness and not to any difficulty of disengagement; and therefore, when the latter had taken place, the mental confusion was of short duration.

Another point, equally important, that is rendered evident by the results of this evocation – as in the greater number of evocations of any given spirit, made at various times, more or less distant from the moment of death – is the change which gradually takes place in the ideas of the spirit, and of which we are able to follow the progress; in the case now under notice, this change is shown, not by the awakening of better feelings, but by more correct appreciation of the facts of existence. The progress of the soul after death is, therefore, a fact proven by experience; life in the flesh is the practical application of the progress thus made by the soul in the other world, the test of its new resolves, the alembic in which it accomplishes a new degree of its purification.

If the soul progresses *after* death, it is clear that its fate is not irrevocably fixed *at* death, for the fixation of its fate would be, as we have already shown, the negation of progress. It being impossible that *fixation* and *progress* can exist simultaneously, we must accept, of these two alternatives, the one that has the double sanction of reason and of experience.

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Chapter IV

SUFFERING SPIRITS

PUNISHMENT

General description of the state of the guilty on their return to the spirit-world dictated at a meeting of the Spiritist Society of Paris, October 1860.

“Wicked, selfish, obstinate spirits are given over immediately after death to harrowing doubts in regard to their present and future destiny. They look around them, and as they do not at once perceive any object on which to wreak their evil tendencies, they are seized with despair, for isolation and inaction are intolerable to evil spirits, they do not elevate their sight to the areas inhabited by the pure spirits. They next begin to examine more carefully the surroundings amidst which they find themselves; they soon perceive the prostration of the weaker spirits who are undergoing punishment, and they attach themselves to these as to a prey, arming themselves against them with the memory of their past misdeeds, of which they remind them incessantly by mocking gestures. This derisory pantomime not sufficing for their malice, they swoop down upon the Earth like famished vultures. They seek out, among mankind, the souls they think most likely to offer an easy road to their temptations, they take possession of such, stimulating their cupidity, striving to extinguish their faith in God, until, having obtained the mastery of their conscience, they draw them into every sort of evil.

The backward spirit who is thus able to exercise his malice is almost happy; he only suffers when he is unable to act, or when his efforts are frustrated by the action of superior spirits.

Meantime, centuries succeed centuries; the evil spirit, at length, finds himself suddenly invaded by darkness. His circle of action closes around him like a prison; his conscience, hitherto passive, pierces him with its torturing stings. Inactive, and carried away by the whirlwind of regrets and apprehensions, he wanders aimlessly, with hair bristling from fright, as per the scriptures. Presently, a sense of emptiness penetrates his being; a frightful void seems to yawn around him; the moment for commencing his expiation has come. Reincarnation stares him in the face, with all its horrors; he beholds, as in a mirage, the terrible trials to which he is about to be subjected; he would fain shrink back, but he is drawn onwards by a force superior to his own. Hurlled down into the yawning abyss of fleshly life, he sinks through the horror of emptiness until the vale of oblivion envelopes him like a shroud.

Born again on Earth, he lives, he acts, he is again guilty of evil deeds; he is tormented by vague reminiscences that he cannot account for, by fitful presentiments that make him tremble, but that do not yet suffice to induce him to quit the path of evil. Extended on a prison couch, or on a luxurious bed (what does it matter?), the dying reprobate becomes aware, under his seeming unconsciousness, of a whole world of forgotten thoughts and sensations that are coming to life and moving within him. Under his closed eyelids, he sees a light that is not of earth; he hears strange sounds; his soul, about to quit his body, is uneasy and agitated, his stiffened hands clutch vainly at the coverings under which he is lying. He tries to speak; he would fain shriek, to those about him, “Hold me back! I see chastisement!” But the power of speech no longer exists for him; death settles on his pale lips; and those about him whisper “He is at rest!”

Georges”

A truer, more eloquent, more terrible picture of the fate of the evildoer was never drawn. Is there any need of adding, to the horrible sufferings thus portrayed, the phantasmagoria of material

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flames and physical tortures?

NOVEL

(The spirit is addressing the medium who knew him during his earthly life)

“I am going to tell you what I went through with in dying. My spirit, held to my body by the bonds of materiality, had great difficulty in getting free; this was a first and very severe distress. The physical life, which I had quitted at the age of twenty-four, was still so strong in me that I had no idea I had been withdrawn from it. I searched about for my body, and was both astonished and alarmed at finding myself lost in the midst of a crowd of shadows. At length, I was suddenly struck with the consciousness of my state and remembrance of the misdeeds done by me in all my incarnations; a pitiless light illuminated the most secret recesses of my soul, which, feeling itself *naked*, was seized with overwhelming shame. I sought to escape from this misery by directing my attention to the objects – new *and yet known to me* – with which I was surrounded. Radiant spirits, floating through the ether, showed me happiness to which I could not aspire; dark and frightful forms – some of them plunged in gloomy despair, others mocking or furious – were gliding about me, and upon the Earth to which I remained attached. I saw the movements of the people in the world, and I envied their ignorance of the other life with which they are in unconscious relationship; a whole order of sensations, unknown, or rather, *recovered*, suddenly invaded my being. Involved by an irresistible force, trying to flee from the tortures that beset me, I rushed madly forward, regardless of the elements, regardless of the physical obstacles; and neither the beauties of nature nor the splendors of the celestial regions could calm, for a single instant, the torments of my conscience and the terror caused me by the revelation of eternity. A mortal may form some idea of physical tortures from the shuddering of the flesh; but your fragile sorrows – softened by hope, tempered by the incidents of your earthly life, put an end to by forgetfulness – cannot give you the faintest notion of the anguish of a soul that suffers without cessation, without hope, without repentance! I remained, for a length of time that I am unable to measure, envying the happy spirits of whose splendors I sometimes obtained glimpses, detesting the evil spirits who pursued me with their mocking, despising the human beings whose turpitudes I witnessed, passing from the deepest prostration to insensate revolt.

At last, you called me; and, for the first time, a feeling of gentleness and tenderness appeased my suffering. I listened to the teachings given you by your guides; my eyes were opened to the truth; I prayed, and God heard me! He has now revealed Himself to me by His mercy, as He had previously revealed Himself to me by His justice.

NOVEL”

AUGUSTE MICHEL

(Le Havre, March 1863)

He was young, wealthy, dissipated, and absorbed in sensual pleasures. Although intelligent, he was utterly careless of serious things. Kindhearted, rather good than bad, he was a favorite with the companions of his pleasures and much sought after, in fashionable circles, for his gentle manners and agreeable talents; but, though he committed no crimes, he did no good. He died from the effects of an accident, being thrown from a carriage when taking a drive. Evoked a few days after his death by a medium that knew of him through other parties, he gave, successively, the following messages: –

March 8th, 1863. – I am scarcely disengaged from my body; it is therefore difficult for me to speak to you. The terrible fall, that killed my body, has thrown my spirit into great confusion. I am anxious as to what is going to become of me; my uncertainty in regard to this point is most painful.

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The frightful suffering experienced by my body is nothing in comparison with the dreadful state of confusion in which I now am. Pray for me, that God may forgive me! Oh, what misery! O God, have pity on me! What misery! Farewell!

March 18th – I came to you the other day, but I could only speak with difficulty. Even now, I find it hard work to do so. You are the only medium whom I can ask to pray for me, that God's mercy may deliver me from the confusion in which I find myself. Why do I still suffer, when my body suffers no longer? Why does this horrible pain, this terrible anguish, still beset me? Pray, oh; pray for me, that God may grant me rest! Oh, what a frightful uncertainty! I am still attached to my body. I cannot make out where I am! My body is *there*; why am I there still? Come and pray *over it*, that I may be released from its cruel grip. Surely, God will grant me forgiveness! I see spirits who are near you; it is with their help that I am able to speak to you. Pray for me!

April 6th – It is I, who come again to entreat you to pray for me! *You should have come to the place where my body is lying*, to beseech the Almighty to calm my sufferings! How I suffer! Oh, how I suffer! Go to my grave; you must go and pray to God, *there*, to grant me forgiveness. If you do this, I shall be quieter; for I am constantly drawn back to the spot where *what was I* has been laid.

The medium, not understanding the spirit's desire to get him to go and pray at his grave, had neglected to do so. He afterwards went, and received, there, the following communication:

May 11th – I was waiting for you. I have been longing for the moment when you should come to the place where my spirit seems to be riveted to its envelope, to implore of the God of mercy to calm my sufferings. You can do me good by your prayers; do not, I beseech you, relax your prayers on my behalf! I see how opposite was my life to what it ought to have been. I see the faults I committed. I was of no use while I was in the world; I turned my faculties to no account; my fortune only served to satisfy my passions, my taste for luxury, and my vanity. I thought only of sensual enjoyments, and not of my soul. Will the pity of God ever descend upon me, an unhappy spirit still suffering for the faults of his earthly life? Pray that He may forgive me, and that I may be delivered from the pains I am still feeling. Thank you for coming here to pray over me!

June 8th – I am able to speak to you, and I thank God for permitting me to do so. I see my faults; and I hope that God will forgive me. Follow, all your life, the belief with which you are animated; for you will thus win a rest that I have not yet obtained! Thanks for your prayers. I shall come to you again."

The persistence of this spirit, in insisting upon being prayed for at the grave of his body, is a noteworthy peculiarity of his case, and one which is explained by the tenacity of the links that kept him attached to his body, and by the consequent slowness and difficulty of his separation from the latter, owing to his indulgence in the pleasures of sense. It is quite possible that, when offered up close beside the body, prayer may have a more powerful magnetic action, and this aid the spirit more effectually in effecting his disengagement. May not the general habit of praying beside the body of those who have passed away be due to an unreasoning intuition of this fact? The efficacy of prayer, in such a case, would be at once *moral* and *physical*.

REGRETS OF ONE WHO HAD INDULGED IN HIGH LIVING (Bordeaux, April 19th, 1862)

July 30th – I am now less unhappy, for I no longer feel the chain that held me to my body. I am free, at last; but I have not completed my expiation; I must make up for lost time, if I would not prolong my sufferings. I trust that God will see the sincerity of my repentance and grant me His forgiveness. Pray for me still, I beg of you.

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Men, my brothers! I lived only for myself; now I am expiating this wickedness, and I suffer! May God give you the grace to avoid the thorns by which I am torn! Walk in the broad road of holiness and pray for me; for I made a bad use of the possessions that God *lends* to His creatures!

He who sacrifices his intelligence and his higher sentiments to his animal instincts assimilates himself to the animals. Man should use with sobriety the property of which he is only the depository; he should accustom himself to live exclusively for the eternity that is awaiting him, and he should consequently detach himself from material enjoyments. His food should have no other aim than that of sustaining his vitality; his luxury should be strictly subordinated to the necessities of his position; his tastes, and even his natural tendencies, should be regulated by his reason; for, without this mastery of his animal nature, he debases instead of purifying himself. Human passions are a narrow bond that cuts into the flesh; be careful, therefore, not to tighten it. Live, but be not *high livers*. You know not what such abuses cost when we return to the native land of the soul! Terrestrial passions strip us of everything before they leave us, and we arrive in the presence of God *naked*, entirely naked. Rid yourselves, therefore, of those passions, and clothe yourselves with good deeds; they will aid you to cross the space that separates you from eternity. They will hide your human weaknesses with a shining mantle. Clothe yourselves with charity and love, divine garments of which nothing can deprive you!"

COMMENTARY BY THE MEDIUM'S GUIDE

This spirit is on the right road, since, to his repentance, he adds the giving of good advice in regard to the dangers of the evil road he formerly followed. To acknowledge one's faults is, in itself, meritorious, and is a first step on the road to reformation; and for this reason, his situation, though not one of happiness, is no longer that of a "suffering spirit." He repents; and he is therefore becoming fitted to make the reparation that he will accomplish in another life of trial. Would you know what, before reaching that point, is the situation of the spirits of those whose earthly life, altogether sensual, has failed to excite their spirit to any other activity than that of incessantly inventing new pleasures of the sensual order? The influence of matter follows them beyond the grave; their appetites are left intact by death, but, their range of vision being as narrow as upon the Earth, they seek in vain for the means of satisfying them. Never having cultivated mental and moral pleasures, their soul wanders through space – which is a void for them – without aim, without hope, a prey to the anxiety of one who sees before him no other perspective than that of an illimitable desert. The nullity of their intellectual occupations during the life of the body has its natural result in the nullity of the working of their spirit after death. Unable any longer to satisfy their body, they are incapable of procuring any satisfaction for their soul; hence arises, for them, a crushing weariness of which they cannot foresee any termination, and to escape from which they would gladly accept annihilation. *But there is no annihilation*; they have been able to kill their body, but they cannot kill their soul: they are therefore obliged to live on, undergoing all this mental torture, until, vanquished by lassitude, they at length determine to turn towards God.

LISBETH

(Bordeaux, February 13th, 1862)

A suffering spirit who came to the medium spontaneously, under the name of Lisbeth.

1. Will you tell us something about your position and the cause of your suffering?

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A. Be humble-minded, resigned to the will of God, patient under trial, charitable to the poor, encouraging for the weak, warm-hearted for all who suffer, and you will not have to undergo the tortures I am enduring!

2. If you were carried away by the vices that are the opposites of the virtues you point out, you appear, at least, to regret your wrongdoing. Surely, your repentance must have brought you relief?

A. No, repentance is sterile when it is a consequence of suffering. Productive repentance is that which springs from regret for having offended God and from an ardent desire to make reparation for that offence. Unhappily for me, I have not yet reached that standpoint. Speak for me to those who consecrate themselves to the help of the suffering; I am in sad need of their prayers.

This is a great truth. Suffering sometimes drags from the sufferer a cry of repentance which is not the expression of a sincere regret for having done wrong, for, if he no longer suffered, he would be ready to repeat his wrongdoing. Mere repentance, therefore, does not always procure the sufferer's deliverance; it prepares the way for deliverance, but that is all. Before the wrongdoer can be delivered from the results of his wrongdoing, he must prove the sincerity and the thoroughness of his good resolutions by undergoing new trials that will give him the means of making reparation for the evil he has done. If the reader carefully ponders over the various examples we have brought forth in the present material, he will find useful instruction in the statements of even the most backward spirits because they illuminate us in the most intimate details of the spiritual life. While the superficial reader sees, in these examples, only histories more or less picturesque, reflective minds will find in them an abundant stock of subjects for serious study.

3. I will do what you ask. Will you give me some details concerning your last existence? Such details may be instructive for us; and you will thus render your repentance productive.

(The spirit manifested a good deal of hesitation in replying to this question, and also to several of the subsequent ones.)

A. I was born in a high position. I had everything that men regard as conducive to happiness. Rich, I was selfish; handsome, I was coquettish; cold-hearted, and deceitful; of noble rank, I was ambitious. With my power, I crushed those who did not prostrate themselves sufficiently low before me; I crushed even those who threw themselves under my feet, without reflecting that the Lord also crushes, sooner or later, the haughtiest brows.

4. At what period did you live?

A. One hundred and fifty years ago, in Prussia.

5. Have you, in that time, made no progress as a spirit?

A. No, the influence of matter has kept me in a state of constant revolt. You cannot comprehend the influence exerted by matter upon the spirit, notwithstanding the separation of the latter from the body. Pride winds around the soul its chains of brass, whose links grow tighter and tighter about the wretch who has abandoned his heart to its action. Pride! The hydra whose hundred heads – perpetually renewed – have the art of modulating their poisoned hisses so cunningly that its victims mistake them for celestial music! Pride! The Protean demon who lends himself in the deepest recesses of your heart, who penetrates into your veins, envelops your being, absorbs you, and draws you after him into the darkness of the eternal Gehenna!... Yes, *eternal!*

The spirit denies having made any progress; doubtless, because still in a painful situation; but the description given of pride and the horror expressed of the consequences of that vice, are incontestable proofs of progress; for, during life, she would certainly not have reasoned thus. The understanding of evil is the first step towards amendment; the will and the power to avoid evil comes afterwards.

6. God is too good to condemn His creatures to eternal punishment; you should hope in His mercy.

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A. There may be an end to suffering; it is said that there is, but when? Where? I have sought it long; but I see only suffering, everywhere and forever! Forever! Forever!

7. What brought you here today?

A. A spirit, who often follows me, brought me here.

Q. Since when have you seen that spirit?

A. Not very long.

Q. And since when have you begun to repent of your faults?

A. (After reflecting some minutes) *Yes; you are right; it was then that I began to see him.*

8. Do you not understand the connection that exists between your repentance and the visible aid given you by your spirit-guardian? You should see, as the origin of this aid, the love of God, and, as its aim, the forgiveness that His infinite mercy is waiting to accord you.

A. Oh, how much I wish it might be so!

Q. I think I can promise you this forgiveness in the sacred name of Him who is never deaf to the cry of His children in distress. Call to Him from the depths of your repentance; He will hear you.

A. I cannot! I am afraid.

9. Let us pray together; He shall certainly hear us. (After the prayer) Are you still here?

A. Yes; thanks; do not forget me!

10. Come to me, and write your name, everyday.

A. Yes, yes; I will come everyday.

The Medium's Guide. – Never forget the teachings you derive from the sufferings of those whom you assist, especially as regards the causes of those sufferings; let them serve to preserve you from the same dangers and the same chastisements. Purify your hearts, be humble, love one another, be helpful and may your grateful heart never forget the fountain of all grace, an inexhaustible fountain where each one of you can drink abundantly; a living fountain which satisfies thirst and nurtures at the same time. A fountain of life and of eternal pleasures. Go to it, my beloved, and drink from it with faith. Throw your nets into it and from its waves will come a great quantity of blessings. Advise your brothers to imitate you and remind them of the dangers they can meet. Spread the blessings of the Father, as they are incessantly reborn; the more that you spread them around you, the more they will multiply. Point out to your brothers the dangers of the way; *show them, by your example, how to avoid them*; and the blessing of the Highest will be with you, and with those who listen to you.

ST. PAULIN

PRINCE OURAN (Bordeaux, 1862)

A suffering spirit who announces himself, spontaneously, as "Ouran, formerly a Russian Prince."

Q. Will you give us some details of your situation?

A. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!

Pray for me. Happy are they who, in humility of heart, choose, for the undergoing of their trials, a modest position! You know not, you who are devoured with envy, to what a state those are reduced whom you regard as the favorites of Fortune! You see not the coals of fire they heap upon their own heads; you know not what sacrifices riches impose upon those who would make them profitable to their advancement in the spirit-world! May the Lord permit me, the proud despot, to come back and to expiate, among those whom I crushed by my tyranny, the crimes which pride caused me to commit! *Pride!* Repeat that word incessantly, and never forget that pride is the source of all our sufferings! Yes, I misused the power and favor I

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enjoyed; I was harsh and cruel to my inferiors, whom I forced to yield to all my caprices, to satisfy all my depravities. I had elected to possess rank, honors, fortune; and I succumbed under the weight of a trial beyond my strength.

Spirits who have succumbed under a trial are very apt to say that it was beyond their strength; but this is a way of excusing their failure and is generally prompted by pride, which makes them unwilling to confess that they failed through their own fault. The Divine Providence imposes on no one more than he can bear; but spirits have their free will; and, if they bring their will to the task, there is no evil tendency that they cannot vanquish. Unfortunately, it too often happens that, *the more strongly a spirit is naturally drawn to any given vice, the less does he, when incarnated as a man, exert himself to combat that tendency*; consequently, if he fails to surmount it, he has only his own want of will to thank for his failure.

Q. You are conscious of your faults; this is a first step towards amendment.

A. This consciousness is an additional suffering. For many spirits, suffering is almost physical, because, being still influenced by the materiality of their last existence, they have no perception of moral sensations. My spirit is now quite free from the influence of matter; but my moral perception has acquired all the honor of the sensations that are supposed to be physical.

Q. Do you foresee the end of your sufferings?

A. I know that they will not be eternal; but I do not yet foresee their end; for that, I must undergo a new trial.

Q. Are you expecting to start, once again, soon?

A. I still do not know.

Q. Do you remember anything of your preceding existences? I ask you this for the purpose of instruction.

A. Yes. Your guides are here and they know what is best for you. I have lived at the time of Marcus Aurelius; in that life, also, I was in possession of power; and I succumbed to pride, the cause of all our failures. After having wandered for many centuries, I determined to try a life of obscurity. As a poor student, I begged my bread; but my innate pride was still with me; my spirit gained in knowledge, but not in virtue. Learned and ambitious, I sold myself to those who bid highest for my services, ministering to every hatred, to every revenge. I felt my wickedness; but the thirst of honors and of riches rendered me deaf to the voice of my conscience. The expiation of that life was long and terrible. At length I determined to undergo, anew, in my last incarnation, the temptations of luxury and power. Thinking myself strong enough to overcome the dangers of such a life, I refused to listen to the counsels of those who sought to dissuade me from the attempt. Pride led me once more to trust my own judgment, instead of following the advice of the protecting friends who never cease to watch over us. You know the result of that last attempt.

I have at last come to my sense of my weakness and folly, and I place my hope in the help of the Almighty. I have laid down at His feet my miserable pride, and have besought Him to place on my shoulders the heaviest load of humility; with His help, that load will seem to me light. Pray with me and for me; pray also for yourselves that the demon of pride may never gain power over your minds. Brothers in suffering! Let my example enlighten you. Forget not that pride is the enemy of happiness; for it is pride that causes all the ills that assail the human race and pursue it even in the spirit-world!"

The Medium's Guide. – You have felt some doubt as to the sincerity of this spirit, because his language did not seem to you in harmony with the backwardness implied in his state of suffering. Be at ease on that score; what he has stated is true. However great his suffering, he is sufficiently advanced in intelligence to speak as he has done. All he has lacked has been the humility without which no spirit can ascend towards God. He has now achieved that humility; and we hope that, through perseverance in his new resolutions, he will leave triumphant, from his next trial.

Our Heavenly Father is all justice and wisdom. He takes into account every effort achieved by man to overcome his evil instincts. Every victory gained over ourselves takes us up another step of the

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ladder, on which one end is on Earth and the other end is before the feet of the Supreme Judge. Climb that ladder bravely; its steps are of easy access to he whose will is in the work: Always look toward the heights for encouragement, as unfortunate shall be he who delays and turns his head. In this case, the emptiness that surrounds him will be bewildering. He will find himself powerless and say: “What is the use of advancing further. I have profited so little.” No, my dear friends, don’t turn your head away. Pride is deep in the human heart; make this sentiment serve to give you strength and courage for your ascension! Employ your time overcoming your weaknesses and climb the summit of the eternal mountain.

PASCAL LAVIC
(*Le Havre, August 9th, 1863*)

The spirit addressed himself spontaneously to the medium, who knew nothing whatever about him, and had never even heard his name.

“I believe in the goodness of God, and hope that He will take pity on my poor spirit. I have suffered dreadfully; my body perished at sea. My spirit remained fastened to my body; for a long time, it floated about upon the waves. God...”

(Here the communication suddenly broke off. On the following day the spirit resumed his message.)

“...has kindly permitted me to be taken out of the state of confusion and perplexity in which my spirit was plunged, by the prayers of those I had left behind me on the Earth. They waited for me a long time; at last, they found my body. It is now at rest; and my spirit, which had so much trouble in getting loose from it, sees the faults he has committed. When the trial is ended, God judges justly, and His goodness is extended to those who repent.

“If my spirit was tossed about so long with my body, it was because I had to expiate. Follow the straight road, if you would wish your spirit to get quickly free from your body of flesh. Live in the love of God; pray, and death, so horrible for some, will be softened for you, because you will know the life which awaits you. I died at sea; they waited for me a long time. Not to be able to get free from my body was a terrible trial for me; this is the reason that I need your prayers, as your belief is the one who can give the salvation. You can pray to God in my behalf in the correct manner. I repent; I hope God will forgive me! It was on August 6 that my body was found. I was a poor seafaring man, and I perished a long time ago. Pray for me!”

PASCAL LAVIC

Q. Where was your body found?

A. Near here.

The *Journal du Havre* of August 11th, 1863, contained the following paragraph, of which the medium could know nothing: –

“We have announced that there was found, on the 6th of this month, a portion of a human body, which had been washed ashore between Bleville and Le Havre. The head, arms, and bust, were missing; nevertheless, the identity of the corpse has been ascertained from the boots that were still attached to the feet. It has since been proved that the body was a fisherman, named Lavic, who perished on December 11th, being washed overboard from the fishing-smack, *L’Alerte*, in a storm, off Trouville. Lavic, born at Calais, was forty-nine years old. His identity was proved by his widow.”

On August 12th as this incident was being discussed among the members of the circle in which the spirit had previously manifested himself, he made, spontaneously, the following communication: –

“I am really Pascal Lavic; and I need your prayers. You can do me good; for the trial I have been through was very terrible. The separation of my spirit from my body only took place when I had

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remembered my faults; and even then I was not separated entirely from my body, but followed it for a long time, as it was washed about by the waves. Beg God to forgive me! Beg Him to give me rest! Pray for me, I entreat of you! Let this terrible end of an unhappy existence be a great lesson for you all! You should think of the life to come and not fail to ask God to take pity on you. Pray for me; pray that God may take pity on me!”

PASCAL LAVIC

FERDINAND BERTIN

A medium, which lived at Le Havre, having evoked the spirit of a person whom he had known, the latter replied:

“I should like to communicate with you; but I cannot vanquish the obstacle between us; I am obliged to let these unhappy and suffering spirits come to you.”

The following communication was then spontaneously dictated:—

“I am in a horrible abyss! Help me!...O my God! who will take me out of this whirlpool? Who will lend a helping hand to the miserable wretch who is being sucked in by the sea?...The night is so dark that I am full of terror...Everywhere, the roaring of the waves, and no friendly world to console me and to aid me in this fearful hour; for this dark night is death, death in all its horror, and I will not die!...O God! it is not coming death; it is death that is past!...I am separated forever from those I love...I see my body; and what I felt a moment ago, was only the remembrance of the frightful anguish of the separation...Have pity on me, you who know of my sufferings; pray for me, for I would not feel again, as I have been doing ever since that fatal night, the struggles of the death-agony!...But *that* is my punishment; I know it beforehand...Pray for me, I conjure you!...Oh, the sea...the cold...I am being swallowed up!...Help! help!...Ah, take pity on me; do not repel me!...*There is room for two of us on this spar!*...Oh! I am choking!...The waves are covering me, and those who belong to me will not even have the melancholy consolation of finding my corpse!...But no, I see that my body is no longer tossed about by the waves... My mother’s prayers have been heard...My poor mother! If she could but see how miserable is her son, she would pray all the harder; but she thinks that the cause of my death has sanctified the past! She weeps for me as a martyr, instead of the wretched and chastised criminal that I am! Oh, you who know of my misery, will you remain without pity? No, no; you will pray for me!”

FERDINAND BERTIN

As this name was entirely unknown to the medium, he supposed the message just given to be from the spirit of some hapless victim of shipwreck who had spontaneously come to him, as had already happened to him on several occasions. He subsequently learned that it was that of one of the victims of a terrible disaster that had occurred off the coast of that region, December 2nd, 1863. The communication was given on the 8th of the same month, six days after the occurrence of the catastrophe. The individual had perished in making superhuman efforts to save the crew of the lost vessel, and at the moment when his own safety seemed to be secured.

The individual in question was not connected with the medium by any tie of relationship, or even of acquaintanceship; why, then, it may be asked, should he have manifested himself to him rather than to some one of his own family? It must be remembered that spirits do not find, in everyone, the fluidic conditions necessary for their manifestation; moreover, in the state of confusion in which this spirit then was, he could have little freedom of choice. He was instinctively attracted towards this particular medium, who was gifted, apparently, with a special aptitude for receiving spontaneous communications of this kind; and he no doubt had a presentiment of the special sympathy he would

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meet with from him, as had been the case with many others in similar circumstances. His family, knowing nothing of Spiritism, possibly opposed to it, would not have received his revelation, as did this medium.

Although his death had taken place several days before, the spirit was still undergoing all its anguish. It is evident that he did not understand his own situation. He believed himself to be still alive and struggling with the waves, and, at the same time, he speaks of his body as though he were separated from it; he shouts for help, and, a moment afterwards, he speaks of the cause of his death, which he recognizes as having been a punishment: all this denotes the confusion of ideas which usually follows violent death.

Two months afterwards, February 2nd, 1864, he again communicated, spontaneously, through the same medium, and dictated the following message: –

“The pity you showed for my horrible sufferings has given me relief. I begin to hope; I look forward to forgiveness, but after the punishment of my crime. I still suffer; and if I am permitted, for a few moments, to foresee the end of my affliction, it is only to the prayers of charitable hearts, who feel for my misery, that I owe this consolation. O Hope, heavenly ray, how do I bless thee when thou shiniest into my soul!... But, alas! the abyss yawns again around me; terror and agony extinguish this gleam of pity...Night; always night!...the water, the waves that have swallowed up my body, are but a feeble image of the horror that surrounds my unhappy spirit...I am calmer when I am near you; for, as a terrible secret, when confided to a friendly breast, is lightened of half its weight, so your pity for my misery calms my pain and gives me rest. Your prayers do me good; do not refuse them to me! I do not want to fall back into the hideous dream that becomes a reality when I see it.... Hold the pencil more often; it does me so much good to communicate through you!”

A few days afterwards, the same spirit having been evoked on Paris, the following questions were addressed to him, and he replied to them in a single communication, through another medium.

Q. What led you to manifest yourself spontaneously to the first medium through whom you communicated? How long had you been dead when you thus manifested?

At that time, you seemed uncertain as to whether you were dead or alive, and you were feeling all the anguish of a terrible death; do you now understand your situation more clearly? You have stated that your death was an expiation; tell us what was its cause; it will be instructive for us, and a relief to you. By a sincere avowal, you will attract the Divine mercy that we solicit for you in our prayers.

A. It seems impossible, at first sight that any creature can suffer so horribly! How dreadful, to see yourself constantly in the midst of furious waves, to feel incessantly this bitterness, this icy cold that creeps up over you and seems to crush your stomach as in a vice! But what is the use of showing you always the same horrid spectacle? Ought I not rather to begin by thanking you for the interest you so kindly take in my torments? You ask me how long I had been dead when I first communicated. It is difficult for me to answer this question. Remember, in what a horrible condition I was and still am! But I think I must have been led to the medium by a will superior to my own; and – a thing I find it impossible to understand – *I used his arms as easily as I am now using yours, persuaded that it is my own!* At this moment, I feel great joy, a wonderful lightening of my trouble; but this, alas! will soon cease. I know that I ought to make a confession; shall I have the strength to make it?

After much encouragement, the spirit added:

I have been very guilty! What distresses me most is that people should regard me as a martyr; for I am nothing of the kind...In a preceding existence, I caused several victims to be sewed up in a sack and thrown into the sea...Pray for me!

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COMMENT OF SAINT LOUIS ON THE FOREGOING: —

This confession will be a great relief to the spirit. Yes, he has been very guilty! But the existence he has just quitted was an honorable one. He was liked and esteemed by his employers, an amendment which was the fruit of his repentance and of the good resolutions formed by him before returning to the Earth, where he had determined to be as humane as he had formerly been cruel. The devotion that cost him his life was a reparation, but it was necessary for him to redeem his past misdeeds by a final expiation; that of the terrible death he has just endured. He had asked to be allowed to purify himself by undergoing the same tortures that he had caused to be undergone by others; and as you perceive, what he regrets the most is to see that people mistake him for a martyr. You may rely upon it that he will be rewarded for this humility. He will now quit the path of expiation and will enter upon that of rehabilitation; by your prayers, you may sustain him on that path and aid him to pursue his way with a stronger and surer step.

FRANÇOIS RIQUIER

François Riquier, a very commonplace person, an old miser and an old bachelor, died at C—— in 1857, leaving a considerable fortune to distant relations. He had formerly been the landlord of a lady who had quite forgotten him, and who did not even know whether he was alive or dead. In 1862, this lady's daughter, who is subject to attacks of catalepsy followed by spontaneous magnetic sleep, and who is besides a very good writing medium, saw, when in this sleep, Mr. Riquier, who wished, she said, to say something to her mother. A few days afterwards, having been evoked for the purpose of enabling him to satisfy this wish by speaking with the lady, the following conversation occurred between them:

Q. What do you want of me?

A. My money, of which they have taken the whole, the wretches! Sharing it between them. They have sold off my farms, my houses, and all my property, to divide it among themselves! They have broken up my fortune, as though it did not belong to me. Make them give me my rights, for they will not listen to me, and I will not put up with such an infamous robbery. They call me a usurer, and they keep my money from me! Why do they not give it back to me, since they say it was ill gotten?

Q. But you are dead, my good man; you no longer need money! Ask of God to grant you a new existence, a life of poverty, that so you may expiate the avarice of your last one.

A. No, I could not live if I were poor. I must have my money to be able to live. Besides, I don't need any other life, since I am living now.

Q. (The following question was put, in order to bring him to a sense of the reality of his position.) Do you suffer?

A. Oh yes! I am suffering tortures that are worse than the most painful disease, for it is my soul that endures them! I have constantly presented to my mind the thought of the iniquity of my life, which was a subject of scandal to many. I know that I am a miserable wretch unworthy of pity; but I suffer so much that you must help me to come out of this dreadful state.

Q. We will pray for you.

A. Thank you! Pray that I may forget my earthly riches, unless I do *that*, I shall never be able to repent. Farewell; thanks.

FRANÇOIS RIQUIER NO. 14 RUE DE LA CHARITÉ.

It is curious to see the spirit giving his address, as though he were still alive. The lady, who had no idea where he had lived, went to the house indicated and found, to her surprise that it was really the

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last one in which he had lived. Thus, five years after his death, he did not know that he was dead and was still undergoing all the anxiety, terrible for a miser, of seeing his property divided among his heirs. The evocation, suggested, no doubt, by some friendly spirit, had the effect of making him understand his real position and of leading him to repentance.

CLAIRE
(*Paris Society, 1861*)

The spirit who dictated the following communications is that of a woman who was known to the medium when alive, and whose conduct fully accounted for the torments that she endured after death. Her selfishness and personality are strongly reflected, in her third communication, in which she insists that the medium should attend only to her. These communications were obtained at different periods; the last three show an evident progress on the part of the spirit, thanks to the efforts of the medium who had undertaken her moral education.

I. Here I am, I, unhappy Claire! What can I say to you? You speak of resignation and hope; but they are mere words for one who knows that, innumerable as the pebbles on the shore, her sufferings will last throughout the succession of interminable ages. I can lessen them, say you? What a senseless assertion! Where am I to find the courage, the hope, for doing that? Try, with your narrow brain, to imagine what must be *a day that never comes to an end!* It is a day, a year, a century? How do I know? It is not divided by hours; it is not varied by seasons; eternal, slow, like the ceaseless dripping of water from a rock, the day that I execrate, that I curse, weighs on me like a leaden pall! ... I suffer! ... I see nothing around me but shadows, silent, and caring nothing.... I suffer!

I know, nevertheless, that God reigns above this misery; God, the Father, the Master; He towards whom everything tends. I will think of Him; I will implore His pity....

I struggle.... I drag myself painfully along, like some lame creature crawling by the wayside. A power — I know not what — draws me to you; perhaps you will help my deliverance? When I leave you, I am a little calmer, a little warmer; as a shivering wretch that is comforted by a ray of sunshine, so my frozen soul gains new life when it approaches you.

II. My misery deepens every day, in proportion as the knowledge of eternity is developed in my mind. Oh, the wretched mistake of my past! How I curse you, guilty hours of selfishness and folly, in which, forgetful of charity, of devotion, I thought only of my own enjoyment! I curse you, short-sighted arrangements of human life! Idle anxieties about physical and worldly interests! I curse you, for you blinded me and led me on to my ruin! I am gnawed by the ceaseless regret of my wasted time! What can I say to you who are listening to me? Watch constantly over yourself; think more of others than of yourself; linger not in the paths of sensual enjoyment; do not pamper your body at the expense of your soul; "*Watch!*" as said the Savior to His disciples. Do not thank me for these counsels; *my intelligence appreciates them, but my heart has never listened to them.* Like a whipped dog, fear makes me crouch; but I have not yet attained to the freedom of the love of duty. The divine dawn has not yet risen for me! Pray for my parched and miserable soul!

III. I have come to seek you, since you forget me. You believe, then, that a few prayers, now and then, the pronouncing of my name, can suffice to relieve such suffering as mine? Undeceive yourself. I roar with pain; I wander without rest, without refuge, without hope, feeling the dart of chastisement piercing ever deeper and deeper into my rebellious soul! I laugh when I hear your complaints, when I see you sad! What are your weak sorrows? What are your tears? What are the torments of your life, *on which sleep imposes a truce? Do I sleep?* I demand — do you hear? — *I demand* of you to put aside your philosophic dissertations, to attend to me, and to make others attend to me. I have no words to express the anguish of this time that flows on and on, forever, with no succession of

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hours to mark its periods. It is as much as I can do to detect a faint ray of hope; and this hope it is you who have given it me: do not abandon me!

IV. (Remark of St. Louis) – This picture is but too true, for it is not at all overcharged. It may be asked, “What has this woman done to be so miserable? Has she committed some horrible crime? Has she robbed, or assassinated?” No, she has done nothing that falls under the stroke of human law. On the contrary, her life was filled with what, upon the Earth, you consider as happiness; she had beauty, fortune, adulation; everything seemed to smile on her; nothing was lacking to her; and people said, on seeing her, “*What a happy woman!*” And they envied her position. “What has she done?” She was selfish; she had everything, excepting a kindly heart. Though she violated no human law, her life was a continuous violation of the law of God; for she neglected charity, the first and greatest of human virtues. She loved only herself; now, no one loves her. She gave nothing to others; no one now gives to her. She is alone, neglected, abandoned, lost in space, where no one thinks of her or takes any notice of her; and this isolation constitutes her torment. As she sought only worldly enjoyments, and as those enjoyments no longer exist for her, she has an empty void all around her; she sees only nothingness; and nothingness seems to her to be her eternal portion. She has no physical tortures to undergo; no devils come to torment her; but she has no need of them, she is her own tormentor, and she suffers all the more on the account, for devils would be creatures, and would be thinking of her. Selfishness was her delight on Earth; now it pursues her; it is a worm that gnaws into her heart; *it is her demon*.

SAINT LOUIS

V. I would speak to you of the important differences between the Divine morality and human morality. The first has pity for the abandonment of the woman taken in adultery and says to the sinner, “Repent! And the Kingdom of Heaven shall be opened to you.” The Divine morality accepts all repentance and forgives all faults that are acknowledged; while human morality repels the latter and smilingly pardons faults if they are only hidden. The one has the grace of forgiveness, the other, hypocrisy. Choose, you who are eager for truth, choose between the opening of the heavens to repentance, and the tolerance that winks at the wrongdoing which does not disturb its selfishness and its deceitful arrangements, while repelling the passionate sobbing of the remorse that makes its confession in the light of day! Repent, all you who have sinned; renounce your evil ways; but, above all, renounce your hypocrisy which hides the ugliness of evil under the smiling and deceptive mask of conventional forms!

VI. I have become calm and resigned to the expiation of my faults. The evil from which I suffer is *in me*, and not *outside of me*; therefore, it is I who must change, and not exterior things. We carry within ourselves our heaven and our hell; our faults, graven on our conscience, are legible by all when we enter the spirit-world, and we are thus our own judges, *since it is the state of our soul that raises us up or casts us down*. Let me explain what I mean: – a spirit soiled and *weighed* by his faults can neither desire nor imagine an elevation to which he is unequal. Be sure of this: – just as each of the different species of beings lives in the sphere which is proper to it, so spirits, according to the degree of their advancement, find themselves in the surroundings which are in harmony with their faculties; and they can only conceive of anything beyond these when progress, the slow agent of the transformation of souls, clears them of their base tendencies and strips them of the chrysalis of sinfulness, that so they may be able to try their wings, before taking their flight, swift as the arrow, towards the Divine Being, as their sole aim and desire. Alas! I still crawl on the ground; but I no longer hate, and I begin to form to myself some faint conception of the ineffable happiness of loving God. Therefore, continue to pray for me, who hope and wait.

In the next communication, Claire speaks of her husband, who gave her a good deal of trouble during his life, and of his present position in the world of spirits. This picture, which she was unable to finish, was completed by the medium’s spirit-guide.

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VII. I come to you who have so long forgotten me; but I have become patient and am no longer despairing. You wish to know what poor Felix's situation is; he is wandering in darkness, a prey to utter spiritual destitution. Of a superficial and frivolous nature, soiled by carnal passions, he has never known either love or friendship; even passion failed to light up his futility with its somber gleams. His present state is that of a child who, incapable of looking after the things of its physical life, is deprived of the help of those about him. Felix wanders in terror through this world, so strange to him, in that everything reflects the splendor of the God whose existence he denied....

VIII. (*The Medium's Guide*) — Claire cannot continue the analysis of her husband's sufferings *without feeling them in her own person*; I will therefore speak for her.

Felix, who was as superficial in mind as in sentiment, violent because he was weak, debauched because he was unloving, has returned into the world of spirits as naked, morally, as physically. During his terrestrial life, *he acquired nothing; and he has, consequently, to begin everything over again.* Like a man who wakens out of a long dream and perceives how useless has been the excitement of his nerves, this pitiable being, on coming out of the confusion of the separation, will see that he has been living with chimeras that have led him astray; he will curse the materialism that caused him to embrace emptiness when he fancied he was grasping a reality; he will curse the positivism that led him to regard the idea of a future life as an empty fantasy, to look upon aspiration as folly, and to condemn belief in God as weakness. This unhappy spirit, on waking, will see that these words, scoffed at by him, were formulas of truth, and that, reversing the fable, the pursuit of what he believed to be a "reality" has been less profitable than would have been that of what he scorned as a "shadow."

GEORGES

REMARKS ON CLAIRE'S COMMUNICATIONS

These communications are especially instructive because they show us one of the most common aspects of life - selfishness. They do not startle us with the great crimes that fill even the wicked themselves with horror; they paint the condition of a mass of people who live in society, honored and sought after, because they possess the varnish of good-breeding, and because they do not bring themselves under the ban of social law. Neither do they show us, in the spirit-world, any of the exceptional punishments the picture of which makes us shudder; they show us a situation which is the simple and natural consequence of the habits of life, and of the state of the soul, and in which isolation, neglect, abandonment, are the punishment of him who has lived only for himself. Claire, as we have seen, was intelligent but utterly selfish. When upon the Earth, her social position, her fortune, her physical advantages, attracted to her the homage that flattered her vanity and satisfied her desires. But, in the other life, she meets only with indifference, and an empty void surrounds her; a punishment more poignant, for her, than actual pain, because it is mortifying; whereas pain inspires pity and compassion, attracts attention, and causes others to take an interest in the sufferer.

The sixth communication contains an idea that is perfectly true, and that explains the persistence of certain spirits in evil. We are often astonished at finding how indifferent some of them are to the thought, and even to the sight, of the happiness enjoyed by those of the higher ranks. But they are exactly in the position of degraded men who take pleasure in filth and in gross sensualities. Such people feel themselves *at home* in evil surroundings, and have no idea of satisfactions of a more refined character. They prefer their sordid rags to the cleanest and handsomest garments, because they are more at their ease in them; and, for a similar reason, they prefer their low orgies to the pleasures of refined society. They have identified themselves so thoroughly with their kind of life that it has become for them a second nature; they seem to themselves to be incapable of rising above their present sphere, and they accordingly remain in it until a transformation of their nature has opened their

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intelligence and developed their moral sense, and had thus rendered them susceptible of more subtle sensations.

Such spirits, when discarnated, cannot acquire delicacy of sentiment all at once; and, during a longer or shorter period, they occupy the lower regions of the spirit-world; but, in the long run, with the aid of the experience, tribulations, and miseries of successive incarnations, they begin to conceive of the possibility of something better than their way of life; their aspirations point to a higher state; they begin to understand what is wanting to them, and they then exert themselves to acquire and to go up. When once they have entered on this path, they move on rapidly, because they have obtained glimpses of satisfactions which appear to them to be greatly superior to those in which they formerly wallowed, and which, being only gross sensations, finished by causing them repugnance and disgust.

(QUESTION ADDRESSED TO SAINT LOUIS)

Q. What are we to understand by the “darkness” in which some of the suffering spirits say they are plunged? Could this darkness be the same as the one referred to in the Scripture?

A. The darkness in question is precisely that which is alluded to by Jesus and the prophets, in speaking of the punishment of the wicked. But this should not be understood except as a figure destined to injure the material senses of his contemporaries, who would not have been able to understand punishment in an elusive spiritual manner. Certain spirits are really plunged in a thick darkness, an obscuration of the soul which constitutes for it a darkness like that of night, a mental obscurity like that which darkens the intelligence of a mentally disabled. It is not spirit-madness; it is, on the part of the spirit, an unconsciousness of himself and of all that is around him which subsists as densely, in presence of light as in its absence. This darkness is especially the punishment of those who, in the earthly life, have doubted the fact of a future existence. They have believed in nothingness, and this semblance of nothingness becomes their torture, until their soul, making, at length, a resolute effort, breaks through the network of moral enervation by that it has been seized; just as an instant comes when one who has been attacked with nightmare struggles, with all his might, against the terror and oppression by which he has been momentarily overcome. This temporary reducing of the soul to a fictitious nothingness, while preserving the perception of its own existence, is a much more painful form of suffering than might be supposed, because of the appearance of repose which it presents; it is precisely this enforced repose, thus nullity of its being, this uncertainty, that constitutes its torture; it is the utter weariness with which it is overwhelmed that constitutes its most terrible chastisement, for it perceives nothing around it, neither things nor beings; it is, for the soul, a real and absolute darkness.

SAINT LOUIS

(*Claire*) I am here. I, also, am able to reply to the question concerning the darkness of the spirit-world, for I wandered and suffered for a long period in the vague limbo where all is weeping and misery. Yes, the *darkness visible* of which the Scriptures speak *does really exist*; and the wretches who, having terminated their earthly trial, quit the world of men in a state of ignorance or of guilt, are plunged into that icy region, understanding nothing of themselves or of their destiny. They suppose that their state will be forever the same; they still murmur the words which misled them during life; they are amazed and terrified at their utter solitude; darkness, in truth, it is his region at once empty and peopled, this space in which, carried forward by a power they do not understand, they wander, pallid and groaning, without consolation, without affections, without help of any kind. To whom shall they apply for aid? They feel the weight of eternity pressing heavily upon them; they tremble; they regret the trumpery interests which, at least, marked the passage of the hours on Earth; they regret the night which, following the day, often consoled them for the anxieties of the latter by a pleasant dream. Spirit-darkness is ignorance, emptiness, and dread of the unknown... I cannot continue...

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Another spirit gave the following explanation of the darkness in question:

“The perispirit possesses, in virtue of its nature, a luminous property which is developed by the exercise of the purified activities of the soul. It may be said that the exercise of those activities acts, upon the perispiritual fluid, as does friction upon phosphorus. The brightness of this luminosity is proportioned to the purity of the spirit; the slightest moral imperfection dims and weakens it. The light radiated by a spirit is so much the more brilliant as he is more advanced.⁷⁷ Each spirit being, so to say, his own *light-bearer*, he sees more or less distinctly according to the degree of intensity of the light he produces; whence it follows that those who produce no light are in darkness.”⁷⁸

This theory is perfectly correct as regards the radiation of the luminous fluid by spirits of high degree, which is proved by observation; but this does not appear to be the true cause or, at least, the only cause, of the phenomenon we are considering, because: 1. All the lower spirits are not in the darkness, 2. Because the same spirit may be alternately in light and in darkness, 3. Because darkness is a punishment for some of the imperfect spirits. If the darkness in which some spirits are plunged were inherent in their person, it would be *permanent* and *general* for all bad spirits, which is not the case, since spirits of the most utter depravity see perfectly, while others, who cannot justly be termed depraved, are temporarily in profound darkness. Everything proves that, besides the light from an external source, of which they are deprived under certain circumstances; from where it could be concluded that this darkness depends on a cause, or a will, foreign to themselves and that it constitutes a special punishment, appointed, in certain cases, by the Divine Justice.

Q. (To Saint Louis, at a meeting of the Paris Society)

How is it that the moral education of discarnate spirits is easier than that of incarnate ones?

The relations established by Spiritism between men and spirits have led us to observe that the latter are moralized more quickly, by the influence of good advice, than those who are incarnate, as is shown by the cure of obsessions.

A. The incarnate, by his very nature, is in a state of ceaseless fight through the opposing elements of which his personality is composed, and which are intended to lead him onto his providentially appointed aim by reacting upon one another. Matter is easily influenced by an external fluid; if the soul do not react against such an influence with all the moral strength it can muster, it allows itself to be dominated by the intermediary of its body, and follows the impulsion of the evil influences by which it is surrounded; and it does this all the more readily because the invisible beings who beset it, attacking it purposely on its weakest side, take advantage of its tendency towards some dominant passion, which they make use of as a lever in acting upon it.

With the discarnate spirit the case is very different. He is still, it is true, under an influence that is of a semi-material nature; but this state cannot be compared in any way to that of an incarnate. Respect for the opinions of other people, so preponderant in the human mind, is null for him; and he is therefore not tempted, by any false shame, to keep up a resistance to reasoning which his own interest show him to be good. He may struggle against good influences, and, in fact, he usually does so, more violently than the incarnate, because his liberty is greater; but no paltry motive of material interest or of social position interferes to warp his judgment. He struggles from mere love of evil; but he soon acquires the consciousness of his powerlessness against the moral superiority that dominates him. The mirage of a happier future has more influence over him, because he is in the very world in which that future is awaiting him, and because that perspective is not erased by the swirl of human pleasures; in a word, his improvement is easier because he is no longer under the influence of the flesh, especially

⁷⁷ “The righteous,” says Christ, “shall shine like the stars in the firmament of heaven.” We are told that Christ’s face, in the Transfiguration, “shone like the sun.” The luminosity of “the righteous,” asserted not only in the Old and New Testaments, but in the Vedas, Zend-Avesta, Edda, Koran, etc., is the tenet of all the great religions of the earth. — TR.

⁷⁸ “If the light that is in you be darkness,” says Christ, “how great is that darkness!” — TR.

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when he has acquired a certain amount of development through the trials he has undergone. A primitive spirit would be but slightly accessible to reasoning; but it is otherwise with one who has already undergone the experience of life. Moreover, in the case of the incarnate as of the discarnate, it is through the soul, through the sentiments, that he must be influenced. The action of physical causes may momentarily suspend the sufferings of a vicious man, but it cannot destroy the morbid principle that is in his soul; and *no action can deliver the soul from suffering, unless it improves its moral state.*

SAINT LOUIS

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Chapter V

SUICIDES**THE SUICIDE AT THE SAMARITAINE**

On the 7th April, 1858, about seven o'clock in the evening, a man of some fifty years of age, respectably dressed, entered the great bathing establishment of the Samaritaine, in Paris, and ordered a bath. The waiter on duty, after an interval of a couple of hours, finding that the individual in question did not ring for him, determined to enter his bathroom, to see if he were ill. On doing this, he beheld a hideous spectacle; the unhappy stranger had cut his throat with a razor, and his blood had mingled with the water of his bath. The identity of the stranger not having been established, the corpse was conveyed to the Morgue.⁷⁹ The spirit of this man, evoked six days afterwards at a meeting of the Paris Society, replied as follows: –

1. **Evocation – (The Medium's Guide)** Wait a moment; he is here.
2. **Where are you now?**
A. I don't know. Tell me where I am.
3. **You are in an assembly of persons who take part in investigations about spirits, and who feel kindly towards you.**
A. Tell me if I am alive...I am stifled in this coffin!
His soul, though separated from the body, is still entirely plunged in what may be termed the vortex of corporeal matter; his terrestrial ideas are still strong; he does not suppose himself to be dead.
4. **Who advised you to come to us?**
A. I felt that I should be relieved by coming.
5. **What motive led you to commit suicide?**
A. Am I dead?...Not at all!...I inhabit my body...You cannot imagine how much I suffer!...I am stifling...Oh, that some compassionate hand would finish killing me!
6. **Why did you not leave some indication to show whom you were?**
A. I was abandon by everybody; *I fled from suffering to find torture!*
7. **Have you still the same motives for remaining unknown?**
A. Yes, do not force the red-hot iron into a bleeding wound!
8. **Will you tell us your name, your age, your profession, your residence?**
A. No, *nothing*.
9. **Had you a family, a wife, children?**
A. I was abandon by all; no one loved me.
10. **What had you done, that no one loved you?**
A. How many are like me! A man may be abandoned in the midst of his family, if no one cares for him.
11. **At the moment when you committed suicide, did you feel no hesitation?**
A. I thirsted for death...I expected to find myself at rest.
12. **How could the thought of the future have failed to turn you from your project?**
A. I had ceased to believe in a future; I was without hope. Belief in a future means *hope!*
13. **What reflections passed through your mind at the moment when you found your life becoming extinct?**

⁷⁹ The dead-house in which all corpses of unknown persons are exhibited for identification by their family or acquaintances. – TR.

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A. I did not reflect; I only felt...But my life is not extinct...My soul is linked to my body...*I feel the worms that are devouring me.*

14. What feeling did you experience at the moment when your death had taken place?

A. *Has it done so?*

15. Did you suffer pain at the moment when your life became extinct?

A. Less than I suffered afterwards. It was the body only that suffered at that moment.

16. (To the spirit of Saint Louis.) What does he mean by saying that the moment of his death was less painful than afterwards?

A. The spirit was throwing off a load of which he was weary; the pain he suffered in doing so was therefore a source of satisfaction to him.

17. Does suicide always lead to such a state as that in which he is?

A. Yes, he who commits suicide is linked to his body to the end of the period appointed for his earthly life. Natural death is the freeing of the soul from the bonds of the earthly life; suicide leaves the links between the soul and body intact.

18. Is this state the same in cases of accidental death, from causes independent of the will that shorten the natural duration of a life?

A. No. Such deaths are very different from suicide. The spirit is only responsible for his voluntary actions.

This doubt concerning the fact of their death is very common among those whose decease is recent, especially if, during life, they have not raised their affections above material things. This phenomenon appears strange at first sight, but is easily explained. When a subject is thrown, for the first time, into the somnambulistic state, he almost always, on being asked whether he is asleep, reply "No," and his reply is perfectly natural; the seeming error is with the questioner, who has employed a wrong term in putting his question. The term *sleep*, in ordinary parlance, implies the suspension of all the sensitive faculties; consequently, the somnambulist, who thinks, sees, feels, and has the consciousness of his moral freedom, does not suppose himself to be asleep, and, in fact, he is not *asleep* in the usual acceptation of that term. He therefore replies by a negative until he has become familiarized with the special use of the term in question. It is the same with one who has recently died. For him, *death* means the annihilation of his being; but, like the somnambulist, he sees, feels, speaks; to himself, therefore, he does not seem to be dead, and he denies being dead, until he has acquired the comprehension of his new state of being. This state of illusion is always more or less painful, because it is not a true, complete state of existence, but a hybrid one, causing the spirit to feel more or less uncertainty and anxiety about himself and his position. In the example just cited, it is a terrible torture, through the spirit's sensation of the worms that are devouring his body, and through its persistence, which will continue until the end of the time to which the man would have lived if he had not cut short the normal union of his soul and body. This state is frequent among those who have committed suicide, but it does not present the same conditions in all cases; it varies in duration and in intensity according to the circumstances that aggravate or attenuate the crime. The sensation of worms and of bodily decomposition, moreover, is not confined exclusively to those who have committed suicide; it is frequent among those who have lived with the bodily life rather than with the life of the soul. It may be laid down, as a principle, *that no fault goes unpunished*; but there is no uniform and absolute rule in the *methods* of providential punishment.

THE FATHER AND THE CONSCRIPT

At the beginning of the war in Italy, in 1859, a tradesman of Paris, the father of a family, and much esteemed by all his neighbors, had an only son who had been taken by the conscription. Not having the money necessary for purchasing a substitute for him, he killed himself in order to procure

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for the conscript the exoneration from the military service that is granted by French law to *only sons of widows*. He was evoked, a year afterwards, by the Spiritist Society of Paris, at the request of a person who had been acquainted with him, and who wished to learn of his state in the spirit-world.

(To Saint Louis) Please tell us if we may evoke the spirit of whom our friend has been speaking?

A. Yes, he will be glad to reply, for it will be a relief to him.

1. (*Evocation.*) – Oh, thank you for speaking to me! I suffer greatly, but...is just. He will forgive me.

The spirit wrote with much difficulty. His writing was irregular and ill done; after the word *but*, he stopped, making vain efforts to write, but tracing only dots and illegible strokes. It was evidently the word *God* that he was unable to write.

2. **Fill up the gap you have left.**

A. I am unworthy to do so.

3. **You say that you suffer; and you undoubtedly did very wrong in committing suicide. But has not the motive that led you to the act obtained for you some indulgence?**

A. My punishment will be shortened on that account; but the action itself was, nonetheless, reprehensible.

4. **Can you describe to us the punishment you are undergoing?**

A. I suffer doubly, in my soul and in my body; I suffer in the latter, although no longer possessing it, as one who has been amputated suffers in his absent limb.

5. **Was your anxiety for your son the sole motive of your deed? Were you tempted by any other cause?**

A. Paternal affection was my sole guide, though a guide that led me astray; in consideration of my motive, my punishment will be abridged.

6. **Do you foresee the end of your suffering?**

A. I do not know when its end will come; but I know that it will have an end, and this is a consolation for me.

7. **A few moments ago, you were unable to write the name of *God*; but we have seen it written by spirits who were very unhappy; is that inability part of your punishment?**

A. I shall be able to write it when I have sufficiently repented.

8. **Well, then, make the effort to repent heartily, and try to write it; we are convinced that, if you succeed in doing this, you will find relief in it.**

The spirit succeeded, at last, in writing, in very large, shaky, irregular letters, "God is very good."

9. **We thank you for having come to our call, and we will pray for you, in order to invoke upon you the mercy of God.**

A. Yes, please do so.

10. (To Saint Louis.) **We beg to know your personal opinion of the act of the spirit we have just evoked.**

A. He suffers justly, for he lacked confidence in God, which is a fault that always deserves punishment; his punishment would be terrible and very long, if he had not in his favor a praiseworthy motive, that of preventing his son from being sent to his death; God, who sees the bottom of the heart, and who is just, only punishes him according to the measure of his fault.

Observation - At the first glance, this suicide seems to be almost excusable, because it may be considered as an act of devotion; it was such, in fact, but not merely such. As was remarked by the spirit of Saint Louis, this man had lacked confidence in God. He may, also, by his action, have prevented his son's destiny from being accomplished. It is not certain that his son would have been killed in the war; and it is quite possible that the military career was intended to furnish him with the occasion of doing something that would have been useful for his advancement. The father's intention

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was undoubtedly good; and, accordingly, it is counted to him as such; the intention attenuates the fault and merits indulgence, but it cannot prevent what is wrong from being wrong; otherwise, all misdeeds might claim to be excused by the plea of good intentions, and men might murder one another under the pretext of rendering a service by so doing. If a woman kills her child in the belief that she thus sends it straight to Heaven, is she less faulty because she has acted from a good motive? The plea of good intentions, if admitted, would justify all the crimes that have been committed by blind fanaticism in what are improperly termed “religious wars.”

Man has no right to dispose of his life, because it has been given him *in view of the duties which he ought to accomplish upon the Earth*; for which reason he should not shorten it voluntarily on any pretext whatsoever. As he has his free-will, he cannot be prevented from doing so if he will; but he has always to undergo the consequences of the deed. The suicide that is most severely punished is that which is prompted by despair and the hope of avoiding the troubles of life; because these troubles being both trials and expiations, to shirk them is to draw back from a task that had been previously accepted, and, sometimes, from a mission which ought to have been fulfilled.

Suicide does not consist simply in the voluntary act that produces instantaneous death; it comprises everything that is done, knowingly, to bring about a premature extinction of the vital forces.

The devotion of him who exposes himself to a danger of death, in order to save the life of a fellow-creature, is not to be confounded with suicide; first, because, in such a case, there is no premeditated intention to withdraw one’s self from life, and, secondly, because there is no peril from which Providence cannot save us, if the hour appointed for our quitting the earth has not come. When death takes place under such circumstances, it is a meritorious sacrifice, for it is an act of abnegation for the good of others. (“*The Gospel According to Spiritism*,” chap. V., Nos. 53, 65, 66, 67)

FRANÇOIS SIMON LOUVET (OF LE HAVRE)

The following communication was given spontaneously at a spiritist meeting, at Le Havre, on February 12th:

“Have pity on a poor wretch who has so long been suffering such terrible tortures! Oh! Emptiness...space...I am falling! I am falling! Help me!... My God, my life was so miserable! I was very poor; I was so often hungry in my old age; it was for that, that I took to drinking, and so grew ashamed and sick of my life... I wanted to die, and I threw myself...Oh, my God! what a moment! Why could I not have waited a little longer, since I was so near the end of my days? Pray for me, that I may not always have *this dreadful void underneath me*! I shall be dashed to pieces on the stones!...I beseech you, help me, you who know the horrors that are suffered by those who are no longer on the Earth; I address myself to you although you do not know me, because I suffer so much...Why ask me for proofs? I am wretched, is not that enough? If I were hungry, instead of having to bear this horrible misery, so much more terrible, though invisible for you, you would not hesitate to relieve me by giving me a morsel of bread. I ask you to pray for me...I cannot stay any longer...Ask the happy ones who are here, and you will know whom I was. Pray for me.”

FRANÇOIS SIMON LOUVET

(*The Medium’s Guide*). – He, who has just communicated to you, my child, is a poor wretch who had to undergo the trial of poverty upon the Earth; but he took disgust to life; his courage failed him, and the unfortunate creature, instead of looking upwards as he should have done, gave himself up to drunkenness. Having reached the lowest depth of despair, he put an end to his ill-borne trial by throwing himself from the Tower of Francis the First, on July 22nd, 1857. Take pity on his miserable soul, that has advanced but little, but that has acquired, nevertheless, sufficient knowledge of the

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future life to suffer and to desire a new trial. Pray to God that this favor may be granted him, and you will do a good deed.

Researches having been made, there was found, in the *Journal du Havre* of July 23rd, 1857, an article of which the substance was as follows: —

“Yesterday, at 4 p.m., the persons on the pier were painfully affected by a frightful incident; an individual threw himself from the Tower and was dashed to pieces on the stones. It was an old hauler, whose habits of drunkenness had led him to commit suicide. His name is Francois Simon Louvet. His body was carried to the house of one of his daughters, in the Rue de la Corderie; he was sixty-seven years of age.”

This man, who had been dead for six years, still saw himself falling from the Tower and being dashed to pieces on the stones. He was terrified at the void beneath him; he shuddered at the shock that was awaiting him...and, all this, for six weary years! How much longer will his agony continue? He knows not; and this uncertainty increases his anguish. Is not this state as horrible as Hell and its flames? Who has revealed these punishments? Have they been invented by human imagination? No; it is they who are enduring them who come and describe them, as others come and describe their joys. And they often do this spontaneously, without anyone having thought of them, which exclude all idea of their narratives being due to the fancy of the medium.

A MOTHER AND HER SON

In March 1865, the son of Mr. C—, in business in a little town near Paris, had come home to his parents, dangerously ill. This young man, in his twenty-first year, feeling that his last moment had come, called his mother to him, and found the strength to kiss her once more. The mother, bathed in tears, replied to his kiss by saying, “Go before me, my son; I shall not be long in following you!” As she said this, she rushed out of the room, her face hidden in her hands.

Those who witnessed this painful scene supposed the mother’s exclamation to have been only the outburst of a grief that would be softened by time and reason; and, the young man having expired immediately afterwards, they tried to find her, to inform her of the event. She was found dead in the garret, where she had hanged herself on quitting her son. The funeral of the two took place together.

(Evocation of the Son, several days after the event)

Q. Are you aware of the death of your mother, who killed herself in despair at losing you?

A. Yes, and but for the grief which has been caused me by her fatal act, I should be perfectly happy. My poor dear mother! She could not bear the trial of this momentary separation, and she has taken, in the hope of being reunited with the son she loved so dearly, the road which must necessarily keep her far from him, and, alas! for a long, long time! She has thus delayed, indefinitely, the reunion that *would have so soon taken place* if her soul had been filled with submission to the designs of the Almighty, and if she had resigned herself, with humility and repentance to the trial that she had to undergo, and the expiation that would have purified her!

Pray, oh pray for her! And you, mothers, who are touched by the sad recital of her death, take care not to imitate her fault! Do not imagine that her love, for the son who was her joy and her pride, was greater than that of other mothers; no, it was not that she loved more than others, but she lacked courage and resignation. Mothers, who hear me, when you behold the eyes of your children closed in death, remember that, like Christ, they have climbed to the top of the Calvary from which they will rise into the glory of the higher life!

Benjamin C —.

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(Evocation of the Mother) – I must see my son! Have you the power to give him back to me?...How cruel they are!...they have taken him from me, to carry him away into the light, and they have left me in darkness!...I must and will have him...he belongs to me!...is a mother's love nothing?...What! To have carried him nine months in my bosom, to have nourished him with my milk, building up his flesh, his blood with my blood...to have guided his first steps...to have taught him to lisp the holy name of God and the sweet name of *mother*...to have made of him a man, full of activity, intelligence, honesty, uprightness, and filial affection...and to lose him just when he was beginning to fulfill the hopes we had cherished in regard to him, and when a brilliant career was opening before him! No; God is not just; He is not the God of mothers; He understands nothing of their despair and their sorrow...and when I killed myself, that I may not quit my child, they take him from me a second time!...My son! My son! *Where are you?*

The Evoker - Poor mother! We feel for your sorrow; but you have taken the worst of all means for rejoining your son. Suicide is a crime in the sight of God, and you ought to have foreseen that He punishes every infraction of His laws. Your punishment is to be deprived of the sight of your child.

The Mother - I thought that God was more merciful than men! I did not believe in His Hell, but in the eternal reunion of souls who have loved as we loved. I was mistaken...He is not a just and good God, for He has not understood the immensity of my grief and of my love! Ah! Who will give me back my son? Have I lost him forever? Take pity on me, O God!"

The Evoker - You must try to be calmer. Remember, if there is any way of obtaining a sight of your child, it is not through blaspheming God, as you are doing. Instead of attracting to yourself the Divine pity, you are preparing still severer punishment for yourself.

The Mother - They told me I should never see him again; I understood that they were taking him away to Paradise. Am I, then, in Hell?...the Hell of mothers?...It exists; I see it but too plainly!

The Evoker - Your son is not lost to you forever. Believe me, you will certainly see him again; but you must deserve this favor by your submission to the Divine will, whereas, by your rebellion, you must delay that moment indefinitely. Listen to me; God is indefinitely good, but He is infinitely just. He never punishes without a cause; and, if He visited you with a great sorrow in your earthly life, it must have been because you had deserved it. Your son's death was a trial of your resignation; unhappily you succumbed to it during your life, and now you are succumbing to it again, after your death! How can you suppose that God will favor His children while they rebel against Him? But He is not inexorable; He always welcomes the repentance of the guilty. If you had accepted, without murmuring and with humility, the trial imposed on you by a momentary separation, and if you had patiently awaited the time appointed for you to quit the Earth, you would at once have seen your son, on entering the world in which you are. He would have come to meet you with open arms, and you would have had the delight of seeing him radiant with joy at meeting you again after a period of absence. What you did, and what you are still doing, puts a barrier between you and him. Don't imagine that he is far off, in the depths of space - no - he is nearer to you than you suppose; but he is hidden from you by an impenetrable veil. He sees you; he loves you still; he is grieved for the painful position in which you are placed by your want of confidence in God; he longs, with all the force of his affection for you, for the happy moment when he will be permitted to show himself to you; it depends entirely on yourself to hasten or to delay that moment. Raise your heart to God, now, repeating the prayer I am going to say for you: "Forgive me, O my God! for having doubted Your justice and Your goodness! I acknowledge that, if You have punished me, I must have deserved the punishment. Deign, O my God! to accept my repentance and my submission to Your holy will!"

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The Mother - What a blessed gleam of hope you have made to shine into my soul! It has lighted up the night in which I was plunged! Thanks; *I will continue to pray*. Farewell.

C —.

In the case of this spirit, suicide did not produce the illusion that leads one who is dead to think himself still living. On the contrary, the mother's soul is perfectly aware of its situation. In some cases, the punishment of suicide consists on that illusion, in the persistence of the links that attach the spirit to the body. The woman in question voluntarily quitted the Earth to follow her son into the other life; it was, therefore, necessary that she would know herself to be in that other life, in order that she might be punished by her inability to find him. Her punishment was, precisely, to know that she was no longer living the life of the flesh, and to have the consciousness of her real position. We see, therefore, that each fault is punished by the special circumstances which accompany its punishment, and that there is no uniform and unvarying chastisement for faults of the same kind.

A DOUBLE SUICIDE FROM LOVE AND FROM A SENSE OF DUTY

A newspaper of June 13th, 1862, contained the following narrative:

“Mademoiselle Palmyra, residing with her parents, was equally charming and amiable. She was, therefore, much sought after in marriage. Among those who aspired to her hand, she preferred Mr. B——, who was deeply attached to her. Although equally attached to him, she thought herself obliged, out of regard for her parents, to yield to their wish by marrying Mr. D——, whose social position was superior to that of Mr. B——.

“Mr. B—— and Mr. D—— were intimate friends. Although in no way connected, they were always together. The mutual affection of Mr. B—— and Palmyra (now become Madame D——) so far from being weakened by her ill-omened marriage, seemed to grow stronger in proportion to the efforts made by both of them to repress it. Hoping to root out his unfortunate passion by so doing, Mr. B—— married a charming and excellent girl, whom he tried to force himself into loving; but he soon found that this heroic remedy was powerless to change the current of his thoughts. Unhappily for all parties, Mr. D——, who was sincerely attached to his friend and utterly unsuspecting of the state of the case, added to the suffering both of Mr. B—— and of his wife, by constantly bringing the former into his house, thus keeping them within the circle of danger from which they were vainly endeavoring to escape. Nevertheless, during the four years of this mortal torture, they remained strictly faithful, in act, to their marriage vows.

“One day, however, the two lovers having accidentally met and having revealed to each other the persistence of their mutual affection, they made up their minds that death was their only safeguard against the dangers of their position. They accordingly resolved to die together; and, as Mr. D—— was to be absent during the greater part of the next day, they determined to take advantage of that circumstance to put their project into execution. Having made their preparations for the act on which they had resolved, they wrote a long and touching letter, explaining the motive of the suicide to which they had determined to have recourse as the sole means of enabling them to remain faithful to duty; they wound up their letter by asking to be forgiven and to be buried in the same grave.

“When Mr. D—— returned home, he found them dead, from asphyxia, in the room in which they had shut themselves up with a pan of burning charcoal. Respecting their last wish, he buried them together as they desired.”

This occurrence having been brought to the knowledge of the Spiritist Society of Paris, the following statement was made by a spirit in regard to it made the following statement:

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“The two lovers who committed suicide are not yet able to reply to you. I see them; they are plunged in confusion and terrified by the perception of eternity. They will be punished, by the moral results of their fault, during successive migrations in which their souls, kept apart from each other, will seek incessantly after one another and will undergo the double torture of presentiment and disappointment. When their expiation is accomplished, but only then, they will be united in a higher mode of affection. A week hence, at your next meeting, you can evoke them. They will come, but they will not see one another. The darkness of night will hide them from each other for a long time to come.”

(Evocation of Madame D——)

1. Do you see your lover, with whom you committed suicide?

A. I see nothing. I do not even see the spirits who are wandering, like me, in the place where I am. Oh, what night! What darkness! And what a thick veil is drawn over my eyes!

2. What sensation did you feel when you awakened, after your death?

A. It was very strange! I was cold and yet I was burning; my veins were full of ice, and my forehead seemed to be on fire! Strange, unheard-of mixture! Ice and fire seeming to strive in me for mastery! I thought I was going to die a second time.

3. Do you feel any physical pain?

A. All my suffering is *there*, and *there*.

Q. What do you mean by saying “there, and there?”

A. *There*, in my brain, *there*, in my heart.

If we could have seen the spirit, we should probably have seen her place her hand, first on her forehead, and, next, on her heart.

4. Do you suppose that you will always remain in the same situation?

A. Yes, always! Always! I sometimes hear infernal laughter, horrible voices that howl at me, saying, “Thus will it be with you forever!”

5. No; we can assure you that it will not be forever; by repenting, you will obtain forgiveness.

A. What did you say? I did not hear you.

6. I repeat what I said, — your sufferings will have an end that you can hasten by your repentance, and we will aid you to do this with our prayers.

A. I have heard vague sounds, but only one word, *mercy*. Was it of *mercy* that you spoke? For I heard the word “*mercy*,” but you were no doubt speaking to the soul that has just passed beside me; a poor child who weeps and who hopes.

A lady present remarked that she had just offered a prayer for this unhappy spirit, and that it was, no doubt, this prayer that had struck her consciousness, since she had mentally implored for her the *mercy* of God.

7. You say you are in the dark; do you not see us?

A. I am permitted to hear a few of the words you say; but I see nothing, except a black crape upon which, at certain times, there appears a face, weeping.

8. If you do not see your lover, do you not feel his presence near you? For he is here.

A. Ah, do not speak of him to me! I must forget him, at present, in order that the image I see on the crape might be effaced!

9. What is this image?

A. It is that of a man in pain, and whose moral progress upon the Earth I have retarded for a long time to come.

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On reading the foregoing recital one is disposed, at first sight, to extenuate the fault committed by the two unfortunate lovers, and to regard it almost as a heroic action, since it was prompted by the double sentiment of love and duty. But we see that it has been judged otherwise on the other world; and that the punishment of these spirits will be long and terrible for having voluntarily sought a refuge, in death, from the struggle imposed upon them. Their determination not to fail in their duty was undoubtedly honorable and will be counted to them as such, by and by; but their true course would have been to vanquish the temptation to wrongdoing, whereas, in fact, they enacted the part of the deserter who runs away from the enemy instead of meeting him.

The punishment of these two wrongdoers will consist, as we see, in seeking each other for a long time without being allowed to meet, *both in the spirit-world and in their future incarnations upon the Earth*. Their punishment is rendered still more severe, for the time being, by their belief that their present state will be prolonged forever; this belief forming part of their punishment, they have not been allowed to hear the words of hope that have been addressed to them. To those who may consider this punishment as very severe and very long – especially as it is only to cease after several reincarnations – we may say that its duration is not absolute, but will depend on the way in which they bear their future trials, and that they may be aided in bearing them by the prayers of those who take an interest in their fate; like all other guilty spirits, they will be the arbiters of their own destiny. And, however painful their punishment may be, is it not better than to be damned eternally, according to the judgment of the Church, which considers them as being so irrevocably condemned to hell-fire forever, *that it refused them Christian burial*, no doubt, because it regarded prayer as being useless in their case?

LOUIS AND VICTORINE

A young man, named Louis G— a working bookmaker, was on the point of marrying Victorine R— a young woman who worked for the same shop. This marriage was so fully resolved upon, by both parties, that the banns of the young couple were in course of publication, and Louis G— – as a matter of economy, took his meals, everyday, with his betrothed.

One day, however, a dispute occurred between the young people, relative to some trifling matter; they both grew quite angry, and the quarrel became so violent that Louis G— quitted the table, and went away, vowing that he would never come back.

Next day, however, the young bookmaker returned to his betrothed, and begged her to forgive him. “Night,” says the proverb, “brings counsel;” the young woman, possibly alarmed that similar scenes should occur when it would be too late to escape them, refused to make peace with him, and broke off their engagement. The protestations, tears, and despair of the young man failed to shake her resolution to have nothing more to do with him. Several days passed; Louis G— hoping that his sweetheart would have got over her displeasure, went again to her room. He knocked at the door in such a way as to let her know who it was; but she refused to open the door. He begged and prayed to be admitted, but she was implacable, and the door remained shut.

“Farewell, cruel girl!” he exclaimed, at length, “farewell forever! Try to find a husband who will love you as truly as I do!” Victorine, who was listening inside, heard a stifled groan, followed by a sound as of something heavy slipping against the door; then all was silent. Supposing that the young man had planted himself on the ground, at her door, to wait for her coming out, she determined to stay in until he had gone away.

A quarter of an hour had hardly elapsed, when another tenant of the house, coming down the stairs with a light in his hand, uttered a loud cry, and shouted for help. The neighbors rushed in, and Victorine R— having opened her door, was horrified at seeing her dismissed lover stretched before

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her, pale and lifeless. Medical aid was sought for him without delay; but he was quite dead. The unhappy youth had plunged his awl into his heart, and the tool was sticking in the wound.

(The Spiritist Society of Paris, August, 1858)

1. (To the spirit of Saint Louis.) Is the young woman, who was the involuntary cause of the death of her betrothed, responsible for the event?

A. Yes, for she did not love him.

2. Ought she, to prevent the catastrophe, to have married him, despite her repugnance for this union?

A. She was seeking an occasion for breaking off the match. She did, at the beginning of their intimacy, what she would have done later, had she married him.

3. You mean, then, that her culpability consists in having encouraged an affection that she did not share and of having thus been, unintentionally, the cause of the young man's death?

A. Yes, that was it.

4. In that case, her responsibility must be less than it would have been if she had caused his death intentionally?

A. Evidently so.

5. Is the suicide of Louis G— excused by the sort of insanity onto which he was thrown by the obstinacy of Victorine's refusal to forgive him?

A. Yes, for his suicide, prompted by the violence of disappointed affection, is less criminal in the sight of God than is the suicide of him who casts away his life from a sentiment of cowardice.

The spirit of Louis G— having been evoked subsequent meeting, the following conversation was held with him: —

1. What do you now think of your action?

A. Victorine is an ungrateful creature. It was very foolish of me to kill myself for her; she was not worth the sacrifice!

2. Did she not love you?

A. No, she fancied that she did, but she deceived herself. The scene I provoked opened her eyes, and she was glad to seize on that pretext for getting rid of me.

3. Did you really love her?

A. I was passionately in love with her; but I think that was all. If I had loved her with a pure and true affection, I should not have been willing to cause her pain.

4. If she had known that you would really kill yourself, would she have persisted in her refusal?

A. I don't know; I think not, for she is not bad-hearted; but she would have been unhappy; it is better for her that the thing ended as it did.

5. On coming to her door, had you the intention of killing yourself if she refused to receive you?

A. No, I had no such thought; I did not think she would be so obstinate. It was only when I saw her obstinacy that a sort of madness took hold of me.

6. You seem only to regret your suicide because Victorine was not worth it; is that the only feeling you have about it?

A. Just now, yes, for I am still in a state of confusion. It seems to me that I am still outside her door. But I feel something else that I cannot define.

7. Will you understand it in course of time?

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A. Yes, when my mind becomes clearer...What I did was wrong...I ought to have left her in peace...I was weak, and I am suffering the consequences...Anger blinds a man and makes him do many foolish things. He understands this when it is too late!

8. You say you are suffering the consequences of your weakness; what is your suffering?

A. I did wrong in shortening my life; I ought not to have done so; I ought to have borne everything rather than put an end to it before the proper time. And, besides, I am unhappy; I suffer; and it is still she who makes me suffer; I seem to be still there, at her door; the ungrateful girl! Don't speak of her; I don't want to think of her; it pains me too much, Farewell.

We here behold a new proof of the distributive justice that regulates the punishment of the guilty according to the degree of his culpability. In the case we are considering, the beginning of the wrongdoing was with the young woman, who encouraged on the part of Louis G—— an affection that she did not share and with which she trifled; she will therefore bear the heaviest part of the responsibility of his fault. As for the young man, he is punished also by the sufferings he endures; but his penalty is comparatively light, because he only yielded to a sudden impulse in a moment of strong excitement, very different from the cool premeditation of those who kill themselves for the express purpose of shirking the appointed trials of their lives.

AN ATHEIST

Mr. J. B. D—— was a man of considerable learning, but imbued with materialistic ideas, and believing neither in God nor the soul. He was evoked, a couple of years after his death, by the Paris Society, at the request of one of his relatives.

1. Evocation. – A. I suffer! I am damned.

2. We have been asked to call you by relatives of yours, who wish to know your state; please tell us whether our evocation is agreeable to you or painful?

A. Painful.

3. Your death was voluntary?

A. Yes.

The spirit wrote with great difficulty; his writing was large, irregular, convulsive, and almost illegible. At first, he betrayed anger, breaking the pencil, and tearing the paper.

4. Calm yourself. We will pray to God for you.

A. I am forced to believe that God exists.

5. What motive led you to destroy yourself?

A. The utter weariness of a *life without hope*.

We can understand that one who is *without hope* should be tempted to commit suicide, which appears to offer to him, who is unhappy, an escape from misfortunes that he has no motive for continuing to bear; but Spiritism, which *reveals to us a future and gives us a firm foundation of hope*, not only destroys all temptation to self-destruction, but shows us that, through suicide, we only escape a minor ill to fall into trouble a hundred times more severe. For this reason, Spiritism has removed numbers of people from the road of self-destruction. Great is the guilt of those who endeavor, by scientific sophistries and shallow reasoning, to give credence to the profoundly discouraging idea, source of so much evil and of so many crimes, that everything is ended with our present life! They will be held responsible, not only for their own errors, but for all the evils of which they will have been the cause.

6. Have you desired to be liberated from the vicissitudes of life? Have you gained something from it? Are you happier now?

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A. Why is it that a state of nothingness does not exist?

7. Would you be kind enough to describe your present situation to the best of your ability?

A. I suffer when I feel obliged to believe in everything that I used to deny. My soul is in pain, horribly tormented.

8. How have you arrived at the materialistic ideas that you had during your life time?

A. In another existence I had been evil and my spirit was condemned to suffer the torments of doubt, during my life, under these impulses I committed suicide. Here you have a series of ideas. Many times, we ask ourselves, how can there be materialists, since having lived in the spiritual world, they should have the intuition of this. Well, it is precisely that intuition that is denied to certain spirits who still maintain pride within and have not repented from their errors. The trials of those spirits consist in acquiring during their corporeal existence, and from their personal reasoning, proof of the existence of God and of a future life, and who incessantly have before their eyes; more frequently, the insolence of not admitting to anything that contradicts their personal ideas and their knowledge still predominates, and they suffer this sorrow until their pride is overcome and finally surrender under the evidence.

9. When you had drowned yourself, what did you suppose was going to become of you? What reflections passed through your mind at the moment?

A. None at all; I seemed to be in the midst of nothingness. Afterwards, I saw that, not having undergone the whole of my punishment; I should still have to suffer severely.

10. Are you now convinced of the existence of God, of the soul, of the future life?

A. Alas! The torments I suffer have convinced me of all that, only too surely!

11. Have you seen your brother?

A. No.

12. Why not?

A. Why should we bring our torments together? Happiness unites, but unhappiness separates, alas!

13. Should you be glad to see your brother, whom we could call to your side?

A. No, no! I am too low for that.

14. Why do you refuse to let us call him?

A. Because he is not happy, any more than I am.

15. You dread the sight of him; yet it could only do you good.

A. No, at some future time, not now.

16. Is there anything you would wish to have said to your relatives?

A. Tell them to pray for me.

17. It appears that, in the circle in which you moved during your life, there are many who share the opinions you then held; have you anything to say to them on that subject?

A. Ah! The unfortunate fellows! May they learn to believe in another life! It is the very best thing I can possibly wish them! If they could see my sad position, it would set them thinking!

(Evocation of the brother, who had professed the same atheistic principles during his life, but who did not commit suicide. Although unhappy, he was calm; his writing was clear and legible.)

18. Evocation. – May the picture of our sufferings be a useful lesson for you, convincing you that there is another life, in which we expiate our faults and our incredulity.

19. Do you and your brother see one another?

A. No, he hides himself from me.

It may be asked how it can be possible for spirits to hide themselves from one another, as there are, in the spirit-world, no physical obstacles, no hiding-places, in which they can shut themselves off

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from each other's sight. It must be remembered that everything, in the spirit-world, is in keeping with the fluidic nature of the beings by whom it is inhabited. It is only the higher spirits whose perceptions are unlimited; among spirits of lower degree, they are restricted, and fluidic obstacles produce, upon them, the same effect, as do material obstacles upon men. Spirits remove themselves from one another's sight by an action of their will upon their perispiritual envelope and the fluids around them. But Providence, which watches over individuals, leaves, or takes from them this faculty, according to the moral qualities of each. It is for them a punishment or a reward, as the case may be.

20. You are calmer than your brother; can you give us a more precise idea of your sufferings?

A. Upon the Earth, do you not suffer in your self-love, in your pride, when you are compelled to acknowledge your mistakes? Does not your mind revolt against the idea of humiliating yourself before him who proves to you that you are in error? What, then, must be the suffering of the spirit who, having believed through an entire existence that nothing exists for us after death, finds himself brought face to face with the reality of the other life? He is overwhelmed with shame, with anxiety, and with remorse, for having so long lost sight of the existence of a Being so good, so indulgent! His state of mind is unbearable; he finds neither calm nor repose; and he only regains a little peace when the love of God has begun to touch him. For pride takes such hold of our unhappy spirit that it covers us as with a winding sheet; and it is only after a long time, and with the help of the prayers of our brothers, that we can throw off this fatal covering.

21. Do you mean your brothers of the Earth or of the spirit-world?

A. Both.

22. While we were talking with your brother, one of the persons present prayed for him; has this prayer been of use to him?

A. It will not be thrown away. If he rejects its help at present, he will have recourse to it by and by, when he is ready to profit by the mercy of the Almighty, that divine *panacea*.

We see, here, another kind of punishment, but which is not the same in the case of all skeptics; viz., besides the suffering he endures, the mortification of admitting truths that he denied while alive. The spirit's present ideas show a certain amount of progress, in comparison with other spirits who persist in denying the existence of God. It is something, and a beginning of humility, to admit that one was mistaken; and it is highly probable that, in his next incarnation, the incredulity of this spirit will have given place to an *innate* belief in God and immortality.

The result of these two evocations having been transmitted to the person who had asked us to make them, we received from him the following reply:

"You cannot imagine how much good has been done by the evocation of my father-in-law and my uncle. We fully recognize their identity; the writing of the former is strikingly like what it was in life, especially during the last few months he spent with us, when it was jerky and illegible; the long strokes, many of the letters, and the signature, are exactly like his. The similarity of words, expressions, and style, is even more striking; for us, the authenticity of the communication is absolutely certain; the only change is his belief in God, the soul, and eternity, which he formerly denied. His brother's identity is equally evident; there is the immense difference between the atheist and the believer, but we recognize his character, his style, and the turn of his sentences. One word, especially, has struck us most forcibly, viz., '*panacea*'; he constantly employed it, to everybody, and about everything. We are, therefore, fully convinced of the authenticity of these communications; our faith in spiritist truths will thus be strengthened, and many of our friends will be benefited by them, for I have shown them to several persons, all of whom have been greatly struck with their evident veracity. But some of our skeptical friends, who share the former opinions of my two relatives, would like to have some more categorical replies; they would like Mr. D—— for instance, to say where he drowned himself, where he is buried, etc. To satisfy and convince them, could you not evoke him

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again, and, if so, would you have the goodness to ask him the following question? – Where and how did you commit suicide? How long did his body remain in the water? At what place was it found? Where was it buried? And what were the circumstances of his funeral? Etc.

“I beg you to get him to reply, categorically, to these questions, essential for those who still hesitate to believe; such replies will do an immense deal of good. I write in haste, that my letter may reach you on Friday, so that you may make this evocation at the *séance* of the Society which will take place on that day.”

We have given this letter on account of the affirmation of identity contained in it. We add our reply, for the information of those who are not familiar with the subject of spirit-communication:

“The questions you request us to ask of the spirit of your father-in-law are dictated by a laudable desire to convince unbelievers; since we cannot see in you any manifestation of doubt or curiosity; but a fuller acquaintance with the subject of evocation would have shown you that it is not possible to obtain, from a spirit, the categorical replies you desire, unless he, himself, is willing to give them. We have no power over spirits; they reply to us if they will, as they will, and, as often as they can. Their freedom of action being greater than it was in life, they are still better able, than they then were, to elude the moral pressure we may attempt to bring to bear upon them. The best proofs of the identity of a spirit are those that he gives spontaneously, of his own accord, or which are furnished by circumstances; and it is, in general, useless to try to obtain otherwise. Your relative has proved his identity to your satisfaction; it is therefore probable that he would refuse to reply to questions which he might well regard as superfluous, and as being intended to satisfy the curiosity of people about whom he cares but little. Just as other spirits on such occasions he could respond: “Why ask me about things you already known?” The state of suffering and confusion in which he still is would naturally render him unwilling to make such an effort; it would be like trying to make a sick man think and speak, and recount the details of his life, which would certainly show a want of consideration for his position.

“As for the results you hope for, they would most likely not be obtained. The proofs of identity already furnished are of much greater value, because they were spontaneous, and because there was nothing that could have suggested them to the medium’s mind; if the skeptics you allude to are not convinced by them, they would be still less so by answers to questions decided on beforehand, and which they might regard as due to connivance. There are people whom nothing can convince; if they saw your relative, in person, with their own eyes, they would think themselves the sport of hallucination.

“As to your wish to have this evocation made the day your letter has come to hand, I must remind you that spirits do not always answer to our call. They only come when they will and can, when the medium suits them, when the place, the surroundings, and the persons present, are agreeable to them; and we can never be sure beforehand of all these conditions, which, nevertheless, are indispensable to the success of an evocation.”

MR. FELICIEN

He was rich, well educated, a poet of mark, good-tempered, obliging, courteous, and perfectly honorable. Ruined by unlucky speculations, at an age too advanced to allow of his repairing the loss of his fortune, he gave way to discouragement and committed suicide, in December 1864, by hanging himself in his bedroom. He was neither a materialist nor an atheist; but he lacked seriousness and thought little of a future life. Having known him intimately, we evoked him four months after his death, from personal sympathy.

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Evocation – I regret the Earth; I had many disappointments there, but less than here. The world of spirits contains a very mixed company, and would need a good deal of sifting to render it bearable. I am in a constant state of amazement. What sketches of spirit-doings might be made here! Balzac ought to take the work in hand; it would be difficult, even for him. But I have not seen him. Where can they be, the clever minds that so strongly flagellate the vices of the human race? They ought to remain here as I am doing, before going higher. It is a curious pandemonium, which it amuses me to observe; and so I stay here.

Although the spirit confessed that he was in “a very mixed company,” consequently among inferior spirits, his language caused us some surprise, because he made no allusion to the nature of his death; and although it was a faithful reflex of his character, this omission caused us some doubt of his identity.

Q. Can you tell us what you died of?

A. What I died of? Of the kind of death I had chosen; I had meditated long enough as to the way I should take for getting rid of life. I confess I have not gained much by so doing. I have freed myself from the cares of Earth, but only to find myself tormented by others far more serious and painful in this life, and of which I cannot foresee the end.

Q. (To the Medium's Guide) Is it really the spirit of Mr. Felicien who is replying? This careless way of talking seems very strange on the part of one who has committed suicide.

A. Yes, but from a feeling excusable in his position, he did not care to reveal the manner of his death to the medium. It was for this reason that he rattled on as he did. Pressed by your question, he ended by making the avowal; but he is much disturbed at having to do so. He suffers terribly for his regrettable folly; and he avoids, as much as he can, whatever would remind him of it.

Q. (To the spirit) We were all the more grieved by your death, because we foresaw the melancholic consequences to which it would lead, and because of our esteem and attachment for you. For myself, I have not forgotten how kind and obliging you always were to me; and I should be very glad if I could be of use to you in any way.

A. And yet I had no other way of escaping from the embarrassments of my pecuniary position! Now, I need your prayers. Pray, especially, that I may be delivered from the horrible companions who are around me, who persecute me with their laughter, their cries, and their infernal jeers. They call me a coward, and they are right; it is cowardice to quit the earthly life. *This makes four times that I have succumbed to the same trial.* And yet I had promised myself, so positively, that I would not succumb again...what a fatality...Ah! Pray for me, what tortures I am undergoing! How wretched I am! You will do more for me, by doing so, than I did for you when I was upon the Earth. But the trial that I have so often failed to bear rises before me as a necessity from which I cannot escape; *after a certain time, I must undergo it again;* shall I have the strength to bear it to the end? Ah! How sad to have to begin the earthly life so often! To struggle so long and yet to be drawn, by the course of events, into new failures, despite one's resolutions to the contrary, it drives one to despair! It is for this that I need strength. They say that prayer gives strength; pray for me! I, too, will pray.

The case of suicide, though committed under the most common-place circumstances, presents to us, nevertheless, a special phase of that crime, for it shows us a spirit who has succumbed several times to the same temptation, which is renewed in each successive existence and *will be renewed until he had acquired sufficient strength to resist it.* This case is a conformation of the principle that, when we fail to accomplish the special amendment for which we were incarnated, we have suffered in vain, for we shall have to recommence the same trial until we come out victorious from the struggle.

To the spirit of Mr. Felicien – I beg of you to weigh well what I am about to say to you. What you call “fatality” is nothing else than your own weakness; there is no such thing as “fatality,” for, if there were, man would not be responsible for his actions. Man is always free, and this freedom is his

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noblest privilege; God has not made him a machine, acting and obeying, blindly, a foreign impulsion. This liberty, it is true, renders him fallible; but it also renders him perfectible, and it is only through the attainment of perfection that he arrives at the supreme happiness. It is his pride that leads him to attribute his earthly mishaps to destiny; for, in general, he has only his own carelessness to thank for them. You were, in your last existence, a striking proof of this fact. You then possessed everything that constitutes what the world calls good fortune; you had intelligence, talent, wealth, and general esteem; you had no ruinous vices, on the contrary, you possessed many excellent qualities; how was it, then, that your earthly position was so seriously compromised? Simply, through your want of foresight. If you had acted more prudently, if you had been content with the handsome share of worldly wealth in your possession, instead of trying to add to it unnecessarily, you would not have been ruined. There was, then, no “fatality” in your case, since you might have avoided the misfortunes that you drew upon yourself. Your trial consisted in a chain of circumstances that were intended to furnish you, *not with the compulsion*, but *with the temptation*, to suicide; unhappily for you, notwithstanding your intelligence and mental acquirements, you failed to rise superior to those circumstances, and you have now to pay the penalty of your weakness. This trial, as you foresee, correctly, will again be renewed; in your next existence, you will be exposed to the action of events that will again excite your mind the thought of suicide, and it will be thus with you until you have conquered the temptation. So far from accusing fate for what is of your own doing, you should admire the goodness of God, who, instead of condemning you eternally for a first failure, offers you, perpetually, the means of turning over a new leaf. You will continue to suffer, not eternally, but as long as you continue to yield to the temptation you have to vanquish. It rests entirely with yourself to cultivate, in the spirit-state, resolutions so energetic, repentance for past wrongdoing so sincere, and a desire for the help of higher spirits so intense, that you will return to the Earth fully armed against temptation. When once you have won the victory over your special weakness, you will advance towards happiness all the more rapidly because, in other respects, your advancement is already very considerable. It is, therefore, just a single step that you have to take; we will help you to take it with our prayers, but these will be powerless unless you second them by your own efforts.

A. Thanks, thanks for your wise exhortations! I need them greatly, for *I am unhappier that I was willing to show*. I promise you that I will profit by them; I will prepare myself so thoroughly for my next incarnation that I shall not fail again; for I long to escape from the base surrounding by which I am now tormented.

FELICIEN

ANTHONY BELL

A bank clerk in Canada, committed suicide on the 28th of February, 1865

One of our correspondents, a physician (who was also an apothecary) in the same town, gave us the following information concerning him:

“I knew Bell for over twenty years. He was a man of blameless life, and the father of a numerous family. Some time back, he took it into his head that he had bought poison in my shop and had killed someone with it. He repeatedly entreated me to tell him the date of this imaginary purchase, and, never failed, on these occasions, to go off into a terrible fit of excitement. He lost his sleep, accused himself of murder, and gave himself up to despair. His family was in a continual state of anxiety from 4 p.m. when he returned home, to 9 a.m. when he went back to the Bank, where he kept his books with perfect correctness, never making the slightest error in his accounts. He frequently said that *a being that he felt inside him* made him keep his books with order and regularity. My assurances that he had never bought any poison in my shop would stagger him for a moment; but, when he

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seemed to be convinced of his error, he was sure to cry, again, ‘No, no! You want to deceive me...*but I remember...and what I say is true!*’”

He was evoked, in Paris, on April 17th, 1865, at the request of his friend.

1. Evocation – A. What do you want with me? To cross-question me? It is unnecessary; I am ready to confess everything.

2. We have no wish to trouble you with indiscreet questions. We only wish to know what your position in the spirit-world is, and whether we can be of use to you.

A. Ah! If you could, how thankful I should be! I have my crime in horror, and I am dreadfully unhappy!

3. Our prayers, I trust, will soften your suffering. You appear to us to be on the right road, for you repent; and repentance is the beginning of rehabilitation. God, whose mercy is infinite, always takes pity on the wrongdoer who repents. Pray with us. (Here, we say the prayer for those who have committed suicide, in “The Gospel According to Spiritism.”) Will you, now, tell us what the crime you alluded to is? That avowal, made with humility, will be counted in your favor.

A. Let me thank you, first of all, for the hope you have given me! Long ago, alas! I lived in a town whose walls are washed by the Mediterranean. I loved a beautiful girl who responded to my affection; but I was poor, and her family rejected my suit. She announced to me her approaching marriage with the son of a merchant whose trade exceeded beyond the two seas, and I was dismissed. Maddened with grief, I determined to kill myself after having glutted my vengeance by assassinating my abhorred rival. Violence, however, was repugnant to me; I shuddered at the thought of my intended crime, but my jealousy carried the day. On the evening before the marriage that was to give him my beloved, he died of poison administered by me, as an easier vengeance. Thus are explained the reminiscences that haunted me on my last life. Yes, I had lived already, and I must live again...O my God! take pity on my weakness and my tears!

4. We deplore the mistake that has delayed your advancement, and we heartily pity you; but you may be sure that, since you repent, God will have mercy on you. Please, tell us, did you carry out your intended suicide?

A. No, I confess, to my shame, hope awoke in my heart. I wished to enjoy the fruit of my crime, but my remorse betrayed me. I expiated a moment of bewilderment by the most terrible punishment, for I was hung.

5. Had you any consciousness of that wicked deed in your last existence?

A. In the last years of that life, only, as I will explain. I was well-intentioned by nature; and, after having been subjected, in the spirit-world, like all homicides, to the torture of the incessant sight of my victim, which pursued me like an embodied remorse, I was delivered from it, after many long years, by my prayers and repentance. I then began a new earthly life (my last one), and lived it peacefully and timidly. I had a vague intuition of my native weakness and of my former fault, of which I had retained a latent remembrance. But an obsessing and vindictive spirit, the father of my victim, had little difficulty in getting me under his control, and in reviving in my mind, as in a magic mirror, the remembrance of the past. Influenced, alternately, by him and by the guide who watched over me, I was now the poisoner or the father of a family earning by his labor his children’s bread. The occult action of this obsessing demon pushed me on to suicide. My guilt is great; but less than it would have been had I acted entirely of my own will. Self-killers of my class, who are too weak to resist obsessing spirits, are less guilty and less punished than those who take their own life from the sole prompting of their own will. Pray with me for the spirit who has influenced me so disastrously, that he may renounce his thirst of vengeance; and pray also for me, that I may acquire the strength and energy which will enable me to vanquish the temptation to voluntary suicide *to which, I am told, I shall be subjected in my next incarnation.*

6. (To the Medium’s Guide) Can an obsessing spirit really drives a man to suicide?

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A. Assuredly he can; *for obsession, which is, itself, a mode of trial*, may assume all forms; but this is no excuse for the deed. Man has always his free-will, and he is consequently free to yield to, or to resist, the suggestions to which he is exposed; when he succumbs, he does so of his own will. The spirit, however, is right in saying that he who does wrong at the instigation of another is less reprehensible and less punished than he who does wrong of his own movement; but he is not therefore acquitted of all blame, because, if he can be turned aside from the right road, it shows that he is not yet thoroughly grounded in rectitude.

7. How is it that, notwithstanding the prayers and repentance that had delivered this spirit from the torturing sight of his victim, he was subsequently pursued by the vengeance of the obsessing spirit in his last incarnation?

A. *Repentance*, as you know, *is only the indisputable preliminary to rehabilitation*; it does not suffice to deliver the guilty from the punishment of his wrongdoing. Providence does not content itself with promises; he who repents must prove, by his acts, the thoroughness of his return to goodness; it is for this reason that the spirit is subjected to new earthly trials that fortify its good resolutions while increasing his merits if he comes out of them victorious. He is exposed to the attacks of evil spirits *until the latter feel that he is strong enough to resist them*; when this is the case, they let him alone, because they know that their attempts would be useless.

The two last examples show us the renewing of the same trial, in successive incarnations, so long as the spirit fails to bear up against a given temptation. Anthony Bell shows us, moreover, a fact not less instructive, viz. that of a man pursued by the remembrance of a crime committed in a former existence, as remorse and a warning. We thus see that our successive lives are part and parcel of each other; the justice and goodness of God are visibly manifested in the possibility of gradual amendment accorded to the wrongdoer, against whom the door of self-redemption is never shut. *The guilty one is punished by his fault itself*; and his punishment, so far from being a vengeance on the part of the Almighty, is the means employed for ensuring his progress.

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Chapter VI

REPENTANT CRIMINALS**VERGER**

The assassin of the Archbishop of Paris

The 3rd of January, 1857, Msgr. Sibour, Archbishop of Paris, on coming out of the church of St. Stephen-of-the-Mount, in Paris, was stabbed by a young priest named Verger, who was sentenced to death, and executed, on January 30th. Up to the moment of his death, Verger showed neither regret nor repentance for his crime.

Evoked on the day of his execution, he gave the following replies:

1. **(Evocation)** – A. I am still retained in my body.
2. **Is not your soul entirely free from your body?**
A. No...I am afraid...I don't know...Wait until I can see myself...I am not dead, am I?
3. **Do you repent of what you have done?**
A. I did wrong to kill; but I was driven to it by my temper, which cannot put up with humiliations...you will evoke me another time.
4. **Why do you want to go away?**
A. I should be too much frightened if I saw him; I should fear he would do as much to me!
5. **But you have nothing to fear, since your soul is separated from your body; banish all uneasiness; it is unreasonable.**
A. One can't help one's impressions! I don't know where I am...I am mad.
6. **Try to be more self-possessed.**
A. I cannot be so, since I am mad...Wait...I will try to recall my lucidity.
7. **If you prayed, it would help you to recover your self-command.**
A. I am afraid...I dare not to pray.
8. **Pray! The mercy of God is great. We will pray with you.**
A. Yes, the mercy of God is infinite; I always believed it to be so.
9. **Now, do you understand your position more clearly?**
A. It is so extraordinary! I cannot yet make it out.
10. **Do you see your victim?**
A. I seem to hear a voice, like his, that says, "I am not angry with you"...but that is a an effect of my imagination! ...I tell you, I am mad; for I see my own body on one side and my head on the other; and yet I seem to be alive, but in space, between the Earth and what you call the sky. I feel the chill of the knife falling on my neck, but that is the fear I have of dying. It seems to me that I see a number of spirits about me, looking at me with compassion; they talk to me; but I don't understand them.
11. **Is there, among those spirits, one whose presence humiliates you on account of your crime?**
A. There is only one of them whom I am afraid of, it is he whom I struck.
12. **Do you remember your past lives?**
A. No, I am in a state of vagueness; I seem to be dreaming...another time...I must recover myself.
13. **(Three days later)** – Do you understand your position more clearly?

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A. I know that I no longer belong to your world, and I am not sorry for it. I am sorry for what I did; but my spirit is now freer; I see more clearly that there is a succession of existences which give us the knowledge we need in order to become, at length, as perfect as the nature of created beings permits.

14. Are you being punished for your crime?

A. Yes, I regret what I did, and I suffer for it.

15. In what way are you punished?

A. I am punished by perceiving the true nature of my act, for which I beg of God to grant me forgiveness; I am punished by the consciousness of my lack of faith in God, and because I now know that we ought not to cut short the life of our brethren; I am punished by remorse for having delayed my advancement through taking the wrong road and through not having hearkened to the voice of my conscience, which told me that it was not by killing that I should attain my end; but I allowed myself to be mastered by envy and jealousy; I made a mistake, and I am sorry for it; for a man should always do his utmost to master his bad passions, and I did not do so.

16. What do you feel when we evoke you?

A. Pleasure and fear, for I am not malicious.

17. In what do this pleasure and fear consist?

A. The pleasure is to talk with men, and to partly atone for my fault by confessing it. The fear is something I cannot define...a sort of shame at having been a murderer.

18. Would you like to be reincarnated upon the Earth?

A. Yes, I beg to be allowed to do so; and I desire to be always exposed to the danger of being killed and to be afraid of it.

Archbishop Sibour, having been evoked, assured us that he forgave his murderer and prayed for his return to rectitude. He added that, although he had been present, he had abstained from showing himself to Verger, in order not to add to his suffering; and that his fear of seeing him, which was a sign of remorse, was, in itself, a chastisement.

Q. Does the man who will commit murder know, on choosing his existence, that he will become an assassin?

A. No, he knows that, by choosing a life of struggle, he incurs the *chance* of killing a fellow-creature; but he does not know whether he will do so or not, for there is almost always hesitation in the murderer's mind before committing the crime.

The situation of Verger, immediately after his execution, is that of almost all of those who die a violent death. The separation of body and soul being a process that cannot be accomplished suddenly, they are stunned, so to say, and do not know whether they are dead or alive. Verger was spared the sight of the Archbishop, because it was not needed to excite his remorse; in contrary cases, murderers are incessantly haunted by the sight of their victims.

To the enormity of his crime, Verger had added the absence of repentance up to his last moment; he was consequently in the best possible state for incurring, according to the Church, the penalty of eternal damnation. And yet, hardly had he quitted the Earth, than repentance awakens in his soul; he repudiated his past and sincerely demands to be allowed to make reparation for his offence. He is not driven to repentance by the force of suffering, for he has not, as of yet, had time to suffer; the change is due, solely, to the voice of his conscience, which he failed to heed during his life, but which he heeds now. Why should no account be taken of his change of feeling? Why should this change, which the Church says would have saved him from hell a few days previously, be unable to save him now? Why should God, who would have taken pity on his repentance before death, be without pity for the same repentance a few hours afterwards?

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Surprise may be felt at the rapidity with which this change sometimes occurs in the mind of a criminal who has remained hardened up to his last moment, and for whom the mere passage into the other life suffices to show him the iniquity of his course. But this sudden enlightenment is far from being general; if it were, there would be no bad spirits. Repentance is usually slow; and it is for this reason that punishment is usually long.

Obstinacy in evil, during life, is often caused by pride, which refuses to yield and to avow mistake; moreover, man is under the influences of matter, which throws a veil over his spiritual perceptions and fascinates him with false seemings. When this veil drops away from him, his mind is suddenly flooded with light, and he is *sobered* from the intoxication of sense. A prompt return to better sentiments is always evidence of a certain amount of moral progress previously made by the spirit and awaiting only favorable conditions for asserting itself; as, on the other hand, a spirit's persistence in evil, after death, is always a sign of backwardness on his part and shows that, in him, the material instincts are still stifling the germ of goodness, and that he will have to undergo new trials that will force him, at length, into the path of amendment.

LEMAIRE

A wholesale murderer executed on December 31th, 1857; evoked on January 29th, 1858.

1. (*Evocation*) – A. I am here.

2. **What is your feeling on seeing us?**

A. Shame.

3. **Did you retain your self-possession up to the last moment?**

A. Yes.

4. **Did you become conscious of your new existence immediately after your execution?**

A. I was thrown into a state of confusion, from which I have not yet entirely emerged. I felt an immense pain; and it seemed to be my heart that felt it. I saw something – I knew not what – roll to the foot of the scaffold; I saw blood flowing; and my pain became all the more acute.

Q. Was the pain merely physical, similar to what would be caused by a severe wound, by the amputation of a limb, for instance?

A. No, it was a sense of remorse, a great moral pain.

Q. When did you begin to feel that pain?

A. As soon as I was free of my body.

5. **Was it your spirit, or your body, that felt the physical pain of the execution?**

A. The moral pain was in my spirit; the physical pain was felt by the body, *but my spirit felt it also, although separated from the body.*

6. **Did you see your mutilated body?**

A. I saw a shapeless mass that I seemed not to have quitted, and yet I felt myself to be entire: I was still myself.

Q. What impression did this sight make on you?

A. I felt my pain too strongly to heed it; *I was lost in suffering.*

7. **Is it true that the body continues to live for some moments after being decapitated, and that the patient preserves his mental consciousness?**

A. The spirit retires gradually from his body; the more tightly he is held in the meshes of matter, the less rapid is the separation.

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8. Some observers have thought they saw an expression of anger, and movements indicating a desire to speak, in the faces of heads that had been separated from their bodies; were those appearances caused by contractions of the nerves or by an act of the will?

A. By the will, for the spirit, in such cases, has not yet quitted the body.

9. What was your first feeling on entering upon your new state of existence?

A. An intolerable suffering; a sort of poignant remorse of which I could not make out the cause.

10. Did you find yourself among your accomplices who were executed along with you?

A. For our great misery! Our sight of one another is a perpetual torture; each of us reproaches the others as the cause of his crimes.

11. Do you meet your victims?

A. I see them; they are happy; their glance follows me; I feel it pierce to the bottom of my soul; it is in vain that I try to escape from them.

Q. What do you feel on seeing them?

A. Shame and remorse. *I have built them up with my own hands,*⁸⁰ and I hate them still.

Q. What do they feel on seeing you?

A. Pity.

12. Do they feel hatred and the desire for vengeance?

A. They pray that I may expiate my crimes. *You cannot imagine what a horrible torture it is to owe everything to those we hate.*

13. Do you regret your terrestrial life?

A. I regret nothing but my crimes. If I had my life still in my hands, I would not give way to temptation.

14. Was the tendency to evil in your nature, or were you drawn into evil by the surroundings amidst which you lived?

A. The tendency to crime was in my nature, for I was but a low spirit. I wished to raise myself quickly; but what I asked for was above my strength. I overestimated my strength; I chose a terrible trial; and I yielded to the temptations of evil.

15. If the good principles had been instilled into your mind by education, would you have been turned away from wickedness?

A. Yes, *but I chose the position into which I was born.*

Q. Would it have been possible for you to be a good man?

A. I might have been a weak man, neither good nor bad; I might have corrected the evil tendency of my nature during my last existence; but I could not have raised myself to goodness.

16. During your last life, did you believe in God?

A. No.

Q. It is said, however, that you repented at the moment of death. Is it true?

A. I believed in a God of vengeance, and I dreaded His justice.

Q. Is your repentance more sincere at present?

A. Alas! I see what I have done.

Q. What do you now think of God?

⁸⁰ The spirit's backwardness prevented his understanding the wonderful peculiarity of spirit-life to which he bears unwitting testimony, viz., *the spontaneous externalizing of his own state*, by the natural but unconscious action of his soul, upon the fluidic matter of the spirit-sphere, *which necessarily surrounds each spirit with appearances corresponding to his present degree of advancement*. Thus the criminal spontaneously surrounds himself with the fluidic images of his victims, which he mistakes for those victims themselves, even though – as in the case brought forward in the text – he vaguely perceives that he “has built them up with his own hands;” and these images, used as puppets by the higher spirits who direct the reformatory punishment of inferior ones, are made by them to suggest to the criminal the ideas of vengeance, pity, etc., as may be required by the nature of the course of treatment to which he is being subjected. Thus we see the literal truth of Christ's assertion “*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you;*” the converse of that tremendous verity being equally explanatory of the nature of “Hell.” – Tr.

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A. I feel Him, but I do not understand Him.

17. Do you regard, as just, the punishment that was inflicted on you upon the earth?

A. Yes.

18. Do you hope to obtain the forgiveness of your crimes?

A. I don't know.

Q. How do you hope to redeem them?

A. By undergoing new trials, but it seems to me there is an eternity between them and me.

19. Where are you now?

A. I am in misery.

Q. We ask you in what place you are?

A. Close to the medium.

20. If we could see you, under what form would you appear to us?

A. Under the form I had in your world, with my head severed from my body.

Q. Could you make yourself visible to us?

A. No, leave me to myself!

21. Will you tell us how you managed to escape from the Montdidier prison?

A. I don't remember anything about it; my suffering is so dreadful, that I remember nothing but my crimes. Leave me to myself!

22. Can we do anything to lessen your suffering?

A. Pray that my expiation may soon begin!

BENOIST

(Bordeaux, March, 1862)

A spirit who presented himself to the medium, spontaneously, under this name, stating that he died in 1704, and that he was enduring horrible sufferings.

1. What were you in your lifetime?

A. A monk without belief.

2. Was your want of belief your only fault?

A. It sufficed to lead me into all other faults.

3. Can you give us any details concerning your life? A sincere avowal will do you good.

A. Being without fortune and lazy, I went into orders, not from vocation, but to give me position. Being intelligent, I made a place for myself; influential, I misused power; vicious, I drew into a disorderly life those whom I ought to have led to virtue; hard-hearted, I persecuted those who ventured to blame my excesses; the dungeons of my monastery were filled with those whom I left to die in them of starvation. If hunger made them groan too loudly, I had them silenced by a violent death. Since then, I have been expiating my crimes, and I suffer all the torments of hell; my victims stir up the fire that devours without consuming me. I am constantly pursued by unsatisfied lust and hunger; my burning lips are tortured by thirst that is never relieved by any cooling drop; all the elements are let loose upon me. Pray for me!

4. Have you not your share of relief from the prayers that are offered up for all the dead?

A. Do you fancy they have much power? *They have, on me, exactly the power of those that I formerly seemed to offer up for others.* I failed to accomplish my task; pay is therefore refused to me.

5. Have you ever repented?

A. Oh, long ago; but only after I had suffered long and horribly. I was deaf to the cries of my innocent victims; now, the Master is deaf to *my* cries. Justice!

6. You admit that God is just, put your trust in His goodness and call on Him for help.

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A. The howling of the demons is louder than my voice; my cries are stifled in my throat, for they fill my mouth with boiling pitch. I did it, great... (The spirit is unable to write the word *God*.)

7. Are you not yet sufficiently separated from terrestrial ideas to understand that the tortures you are enduring are altogether moral?

A. I endure them, I feel them, I see my executioners; all their faces are but too well known to me; every one of them has a name that thunders in my brain.

8. What made you commit such atrocities?

A. The vices with which I was imbued; the brutality of my passions.

9. Have you never implored the assistance of good spirits to help you out of your misery?

A. I see only the demons of hell.

10. Were you afraid of them during your life?

A. No, I feared nothing. Annihilation was my creed; pleasure, at any cost, was my worship. Divinities of hell...*they* have not forsaken me! I consecrated my life to them; they will never give me up!

11. Do you foresee no end to your suffering?

A. There is no end to the infinite.

12. God's goodness is infinite; there is nothing that cannot come to an end, if He so wills it!

A. If He could but will it!

13. Why did you come to inscribe yourself here?

A. I don't know how it was; but I wanted to speak, just as I should want to cry out as a relief to my suffering.

14. Do not your demons try to prevent you from writing?

A. No, but they are beside me, they hear me; that is why I don't care to stop writing.

15. Is it the first time you have written thus?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you know that spirits could thus enter into communication with men?

A. No.

Q. Then how did you find it out?

A. I don't know.

16. What sensation have you felt on coming to me?

A. A calming of my terrors.

17. How did you perceive that you were here?

A. It was as though I had wakened out of sleep.

18. What did you do, in order to put yourself in communication with me?

A. I don't understand it; didn't *you* feel how it was?

19. I don't ask you about *my* feeling, but about *yours*. Try to see what you are doing at this moment, while I am writing for you.

A. You are my thought; that's all I see of the matter.

20. You thus did not have the will to make me write?

A. No, it is I who am writing; I think through you.

21. Try to see more clearly what you are doing. The good spirits around you will help you to understand it.

A. No, good angels do not come into Hell.

Q. You are not alone. Look around you; try to see.

A. I feel that I am helped to think through you; your hand obeys me; I do not touch you, and yet I hold you; I don't understand it.

22. Ask for the help of your protectors; we will pray together.

A. You are going to leave me! Stay with me; they will seize me again! I beseech you stay! Stay!

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23. I cannot stay any longer. Come back every day. We will pray together; and good spirits will help you.

A. Yes, I would beg for pardon. Ask for me; I cannot ask.

The Medium's Guide – Courage, what you ask for this spirit will be granted, but his expiation is far from being ended. The atrocities committed by him are unnamable and innumerable; and his guilt is all the greater because he possessed intelligence, education, and knowledge. He sinned with the full knowledge of the evil of his course, and his sufferings are consequently terrible; but, with the help and example of prayer, they will be mitigated, because he will know that they may have an end, and he will thus be sustained by hope. God sees that he is on the road to repentance, *and he has therefore been allowed and enabled to communicate with you, in order that he may be encouraged and sustained.* Think of him often; we leave him in your care, that you may strengthen him, in the good resolutions that he will form, with the aid of your counsels. His repentance will be followed by the desire to make atonement for his crimes; he will then demand a new earthly existence, to practice goodness in place of the evil he has done; and, when the Lord is satisfied with his state and sees him to be sufficiently resolute in his good intentions, he will be aided to see the Divine light that will guide him to the haven, and he will be received into favor, as a returning prodigal. Be confident of success; we will give you our help in the accomplishment of your task.

PAULIN

We have placed this spirit among the repentant criminals, although he did not fall under the ban of human justice; because criminality consists in evil deeds, and not in the chastisement inflicted by men. It is the same with the spirits whose case is brought forward in the following recital.

THE SPIRIT OF CASTELNAUDARY

A small house, near Castelnaudary, was the scene of strange noises and various manifestations that caused it to be regarded as being haunted by some evil genius. On this account, it was exorcised, in 1848, but without effect. The owner, Mr. D—— having determined to occupy it, died suddenly, after some years of occupation; his son, who next occupied it, on entering one of the rooms, received a vigorous slap from an unseen hand; as he was alone at the time, he could not doubt that the slap had been given by some occult being, and he at once quitted the house, in which, according to local tradition, a great crime was formerly committed.

The spirit who gave the slap, having been evoked by the Paris Society, in 1859, manifested its presence by various acts of violence; all the efforts made to calm him were thrown away. Saint Louis was questioned on the subject, and replied: "It is a spirit of the worst kind, a veritable monster. We have made him come, but we have not been able to make him write, notwithstanding all that had been said to him. The unhappy wretch has his free-will, and a sad use he makes of it."

To our question whether he was susceptible of improvement, Saint Louis replied, "Why should he not be? *Are not all spirits improvable*, this one, like all others? You must expect, however, to find the task a difficult one; but, however great his perversity, the rendering of good for evil will influence him in time. Begin by praying for him; and, a month hence, evoke him again. You can then judge of the change that will have taken place in him."

The same spirit when evoked again, showed himself much more tractable, then, by degrees, submissive and repentant. From the information given about him, partly by himself, partly by other spirits, we ascertained that, in 1608, he lived in the house alluded to, and that he there assassinated his brother whom he suspected of rivalry in regard to the lady he wished to marry, by stabbing him in the throat when asleep; that, a few years afterwards, he assassinated, in the same way, the lady herself,

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whom he had married shortly after the murder of his brother; that he died, at the age of eighty, without having been called to account for these crimes, to which, in that age of confusion and violence, but little attention was paid; and that, since his death, he had constantly tried to do harm, and had caused several accidents that had happened in the house. A seeing medium, who was present at his first evocation, saw him at the moment when those about him were trying to get him to write; – he was shaking the medium's arm with great violence, his aspect was alarming he had on a shirt stained with blood, and was holding a dagger.

1. (To Saint Louis) – Q. Be so good as to describe to us the sort of torture undergone by this spirit.

A. It is atrociously painful for him; he has been sentenced to remain in the house in which the crimes were committed, without ever being able to direct his thought to anything else than those crimes, which are incessantly present before him; and he believes himself to be condemned to this torture for all eternity. He sees himself constantly at the moment when he committed those murders; every other remembrance is taken from him, all communication with any other spirits is forbidden to him; upon the Earth, he can only be in that house, and, if he goes into space, he is in darkness and solitude.

2. Is there any way of dislodging him from the house in question, and, if so, how could it be done?

A. It is always easy to get rid of such spirits by praying for them; but *that* is just what people usually neglect to do, preferring to try the plan of frightening them away with exorcisms, which divert instead of terrifying them.

3. By inducing the persons interested in the matter to pray for him, and by praying for him ourselves, could we dislodge him?

A. Yes, but only by praying with sincerity and fervor.

4. He has been in this state for over two hundred years; does he perceive the lapse of time as he did when alive? That is to say, does time seem to him longer, or shorter, than when he was alive?

A. It seems to him longer; *sleep has no existence for him.*

5. We have been told that, for spirits, time no longer exists, and that, for them, a century is but a point in eternity; the perception of time is not, then, the same with all spirits?

A. Certainly not; the lapse of time is nothing in the case of spirits who have reached an elevated degree of advancement; but, to spirits of low degree, time often seems very long, especially to those who suffer.

6. From where did this spirit come before his last incarnation?

A. He had had an existence among the most ferocious savages of your globe, and, before that, he was incarnated in a planet inferior to Earth.

7. This spirit is punished very severely for the crimes committed by him; if he previously lived among barbarians, he must have been guilty of deeds no less atrocious than those of his last life; was he punished as severely for them?

A. He was punished less severely, because, being then more ignorant, he was less aware of the evil of what he did.

8. Is the state of this spirit that of the beings who are commonly called “the damned”?

A. Absolutely so, and there are states even more frightful. The suffering of spirits is far from being the same for all, even among those who have committed the same crimes; they vary according as the guilty party is more or less *accessible* to repentance. For this one, the house in which he committed his crimes is his “hell;” others carry their “hell” on themselves, in the passions by which they are tormented, and which they cannot satisfy.

9. This spirit, despite his inferiority, feels the good effects of prayer; we have witnessed the same susceptibility in other spirits, equally perverse, and equally brutal; how is it, then, that

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spirits who are more enlightened, whose intelligence is more developed, often show themselves to be completely void of good feeling, that they laugh at everything that is most sacred, that nothing touches them, and that there is not truce to their cynicism?

A. Prayer has no favorable effect except in the case of spirits who have begun to repent. He who, impelled by pride, revolts against God, persists in his mistaken course and goes from bad to worse, as is the case with some unhappy spirits, derives no benefit from the prayers offered for him, and can derive none, until the day when a gleam of repentance shall have entered his soul. The powerlessness of prayer is a chastisement for spirits who remain obdurate; prayer brings relief to those, only, who are not entirely hardened.

10. When we see a spirit inaccessible to the influence of prayer, should we abstain from praying for him?

A. Certainly not, for, sooner or later, your action may triumph over his hardness and may awaken in him the germ of salutary thoughts.

It is with such spirits as with certain sick people on whom medicines only act slowly and after a long course of treatment; while, upon others, they act quickly. When once we have got it into our minds that *all spirits are perfectible* and that *no spirit is eternally and fatally doomed to evil*, we can understand that, *sooner or later, prayer will take effect upon them*; even that which, at first, seems inefficacious, nonetheless depositing in their minds the salutary germs which predispose them to goodness, even though it may seem, at first, to have failed to touch them. We should therefore be wrong in relaxing our efforts, simply because they have not succeeded at the outset.

11. If this spirit were reincarnated, to what class of human beings would he belong?

A. That would depend on himself and on the degree of his repentance.

Several conversations with the spirit in question effected a marked change in his moral state. Here are some extracts from these conversations.

12. To the spirit.

Q. Why could you not write the first time we evoked you?

A. I did not choose to do so.

Q. Why did you not choose to do so?

A. From ignorance and brutishness.

13. You are now able to quit, when you will, the house at Castelnaudary?

A. I am permitted to do so, because I profit by your good advice.

Q. Do you feel some relief to your sufferings?

A. I begin to hope.

14. If we could see you now, under what appearance would you appear to us?

A. You would see me in my shirt, without the dagger.

Q. How is it that you have no longer the dagger?

A. I curse it; *God spares me from the sight of it*.

15. If Mr. D—— (the son, who received the slap,) returned to the house, would you do him any harm?

A. No, for I am repentant.

Q. And if he again dared you to hurt him?

A. Oh! Don't ask me that! I should not be able to restrain myself; it would be beyond my power, for I am still only a villain.

16. Do you begin to foresee the end of your sufferings?

A. Oh! Not yet, it is much more that I deserve that I am permitted, through your intercession, to know that they will not last forever.

17. Be kind enough to describe to us the situation in which you were, before we called you for the first time. You may be sure that we ask this only as a means of being useful to you, and not from any motive of curiosity.

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A. I have told you, already, that I had no consciousness of anything in the world but my crimes, and that I could only quit the house in which I had committed them to go up into space, where there was nothing around me but solitude and darkness; I cannot give you any idea of what it was like, for I never could understand it; the moment I rose up into the air, it was all blackness and emptiness, I cannot tell what it was. At present, I feel much more remorse, and yet I am no longer compelled to remain in that fatal house; I am allowed to wander about upon the Earth and to gain light from what I observe; but, in doing so, I comprehend still more clearly the enormity of my wickedness; so that, if I suffer less in one way, I suffer more in another because of my repentance; but, at least, I have hope.

18. If you had to undergo a new corporeal existence, what sort of a one would you choose?

A. I have not yet seen and reflected enough to know.

19. During your long isolation – we might say, your *captivity* – did you feel any remorse?

A. Not the least; and that is why I suffered so long; it was only when I began to feel remorse that the circumstances were combined, unknown to me, which led to the evocation that began the work of my deliverance. Thanks be to you all, who took pity on me, and who have enlightened me!

We have seen misers suffering from the sight of gold that they could not touch and which had become for them a veritable chimera; the haughty, tormented by jealousy of honors which they saw paid to others, and which were refused to them; those who had commanded upon the Earth, humiliated by the invisible power which constrained them to obey, and by the sight of their former subordinates, who no longer bowed down before them; atheists, subjected to the torments of uncertainty, and finding themselves in utter isolation in the midst of immensity, without meeting any creatures who could enlighten them as to their position. In the spirit-world, if there are joys for every virtue, there are also punishments for every fault; and the law of God inevitably reaches the misdeeds that are not reached by human law.

It is also to be remarked that the same faults, even though committed under the same conditions, are punished by very different chastisements, according to the degree of mental enlightenment of the spirits by whom they are committed. On spirits who are extremely backward and uncultured, like the one we have been considering, the punishments inflicted are, so to say, more material than moral, while the contrary is the case in regard to spirits whose intelligence and sensibility are more developed. The first require punishment appropriate to the roughness and toughness of their nature, in order to make them comprehend the disadvantages of their position and to inspire them with the desire to escape from it; while mere shame, for instance, which would make little or no impression on them, would be intolerable for others.

In the penal code of the Divine Government, the wisdom, goodness, and forethought of God for His creatures are manifested in even the minutest details; everything is proportional; everything is combined with admirable solicitude to facilitate, for the guilty, the means of rehabilitating themselves; the slightest movement of their soul towards goodness is counted to them. According to the dogma of eternal punishment, on the contrary, those who have sinned much and those who have sinned but little, those who have failed once and those who have failed a hundred times, the hardened and the repentant, are all thrown into the same hell; everything is contrived to keep them all at the bottom of the abyss; no plank of safety is offered to them; a single fault may hurl them into the pit forever, without any account being taken of the good they may have done. On which side is true justice and true goodness?

The evocation of the spirit in question was not, then, a result of chance. As it was destined to be useful to him, the spirits who watched over him, seeing that he was beginning to comprehend the enormity of his crimes, had judged that the time had come for giving him efficacious help, and they accordingly brought about a concourse of circumstances that led up to that end. We have often seen this sort of management on the part of superior spirits.

It has been asked, in reference to this subject, what would have become of the spirit in question if he had not been evoked, and what becomes of the mass of suffering spirits who cannot be evoked or of whom no one thinks? To this query we reply that the ways of God for the salvation of His erring

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children are innumerable; evocation is a means of giving them help, but it is certainly not the only one, and God forgets none of the beings He has called into existence. All spirits have, doubtless, a share in the influence of the collective prayers that are offered for them by the benevolent.

But it is evident that God cannot have subordinated the fate of the spirits who are undergoing punishment to the knowledge or the goodwill of men. One of the earliest results of Spiritism was, as we know, to show to the latter the assistance they could give to their discarnate brother; and, while men thus learn the solidarity which exists between all the realms of being, the opening of this new field of charity is as useful to them as to those whom they assist, because it furnishes them with additional occasions for doing good. But we cannot suppose that the Divine Providence has ever failed to provide for the needs of its creatures, or that suffering spirits have ever lacked, at any epoch, the succor appropriate to their condition.

JACQUES LATOUR

A notorious assassin condemned by the Supreme Court of Foix and executed in September 1864.

At a private meeting of a few spiritists, at Brussels, Sept. 13th, 1864, at which we were present, a lady-medium was asked to write; no special evocation having been made, her hand wrote, with extraordinary agitation, in very large letters, and after having violently scratched the paper, the words:

“I repent! I repent! Latour.”

Surprised at this unexpected communication – for which nothing had prepared us, for no one was thinking of the unhappy criminal, whose fate was unknown to most of those who were present – a few words of commiseration and encouragement were addressed to the spirit, after which he was asked this question:

“What motive induced you to come here rather than to go elsewhere, since we did not call you?”

The lady (who was also a speaking medium) replied, aloud:

“I saw that you were compassionate, and that you would take pity on me; whereas others have evoked me more from curiosity than from charity, or shrink from me in horror.”

Then began a scene, utterly indescribable, and that lasted for not less than half an hour. The medium’s words, gestures, and expression of face, all showed that the spirit had identified himself with her personality; at times, his accents of despair were so heartrending, he spoke of his anguish and his sufferings in tones so agonizing, his supplications were so vehement, that all present were deeply affected.

Some of the party was even alarmed at the excitement of the medium; but we considered that the communication of a spirit who repents and implores pity offered no danger. If he borrowed the medium’s organs, it was in order to better to depict his situation and to awaken a livelier interest in his fate, and not, as in the case of obsessing and possessing spirits, in order to obtain command of, and to dominate, the medium. We could not doubt that this temporary borrowing of the medium’s organism had been permitted both for his own good and for the enlightenment of the persons present. Borrowing the medium’s voice, he exclaimed:

“Oh! Yes, pity! You know not how much I need it, for you know not how much I suffer!... no, you know not, you could not understand it! It is horrible... the guillotine! What is it in comparison with what I have now to endure? It is nothing; it was but a moment. But the fire that now devours me is far worse; it is a continual death; it is a suffering that gives neither truce nor rest... that has no end!

“And my victims who are there, all around me, who show me their wounds, who pursue me with their eyes! They are there, before me; I see them all; yes, *all*, I see them all! And I cannot avoid them! And this pool of blood! And this gold covered with blood! All is there, always before me! Do you smell the stench of blood? Blood, everywhere blood!

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They are there, my poor victims! They implore me to take pity on them! And I, un pitying, I strike, and strike, and strike again! The sight of their blood intoxicates me!

"I thought that, after death, all would be ended; that's why I braved death! I braved God; I denied that there was a God! And now, when I believed that everything would be over, I have a terrible awaking! Ah, yes, terrible, indeed! I am surrounded with corpses; with threatening faces; I wade through blood! I thought I should be dead, and I am alive!... it is hideous! it is horrible! More horrible than all the tortures of the Earth!

"Oh! If men could know what there is beyond the life of the Earth! If they knew what it costs to have done evil, there would be no more assassins, no more criminals, and no more malefactors! Would that all murderers could see what I see and what I have to endure...No, no, there would be no more of them...it is too dreadful to suffer as I suffer!

"I know that I have deserved it, O my God! for I had no pity for my victims, I pushed away their supplicating hands when they besought me to spare them. Yes, I was cruel; I killed them, in my dastardly wickedness, to get their gold! I have sinned impiously; I denied Thee! I blasphemed Thy holy name! *I wanted to drown all thought; and therefore I tried to persuade myself that Thou didst not exist!*...O my God! I am a horrible criminal! I understand it now. But wilt thou not take pity on me? Thou art God, that is to say, goodness, mercy! Thou art all-powerful!

Pity, Lord! Oh! Pity! Pity! I pray Thee, be not inflexible; deliver me from this odious spectacle, from these horrible images...from this blood...from my victims *whose glances stab me to the heart, like so many daggers!*

"You are here, who hear me, you are kind and charitable; yes, I see, you will take pity on me, you will pray for me! Oh, I entreat you to do so; do not repel me. You will beg of God to take away this horrible spectacle from before my eyes; He will hear you, because you are good. I beseech you, do not repel me as I repelled others...Pray for me."

All those who were present, touched by his regrets, addressed to him words of encouragement and consolation. "God," we told him, "is not inflexible; what He demands of the guilty is sincere repentance, and the desire to make reparation for the evil he has done. Since your heart is no longer hardened, and since you beg Him to forgive your crimes, He will extend His mercy to you, if you persevere in your good resolutions to redeem the evil of your past. You cannot give back to your victims the life you took from them; but, if you ask it with fervor, God will grant you to find yourself thrown among them again in a new existence, in which you will be able to show them as much devotedness as you have shown them cruelty; and, when He judges your expiation to be sufficient, He will take you again into favor. The duration of your chastisement rests with yourself; it depends on you to shorten it; we promise to help you with our prayers and to demand for you the help of good spirits. We will now recite for you the prayer, contained in "*The Gospel According to Spiritism*," for the suffering and repentant. We shall not employ the prayer for evil spirits, because, as you repent, as you implore God's forgiveness and renounce your former evil, you are regarded by us as a spirit who is unhappy, only, but not as an evil one."

The prayer having been recited, the spirit, after a few moments of calm, resumed his discourse, by exclaiming:

"Thanks, my God!...Oh! thanks! Thou hast had pity on me; those horrible images are going away...Do not forsake me...Send me Thy good spirits to sustain me! Thanks!

After this scene, the medium remained, for some little time, exhausted and overcome; she was so tired out that she could not move hand or foot; she remembered, but, at first, only confusedly, what had taken place; presently, she was able to recall something of what had been spoken by her, involuntarily, and with a vague consciousness that it was not she who was speaking.

The next day, in another gathering of spiritist friends, the same spirit again manifested himself, recommencing, though only for a few minutes, the scene of the preceding evening, with the same

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impressive pantomime, but less violent; after which he wrote, through the same medium, with feverish agitation, the following words: –

“Thanks for your prayers; I am already better for them. I have prayed to God with such fervor that He has granted me a lightening of my sufferings, but only for a moment; for I shall see them again, my victims...there they are! There they are!...Do you see this blood?

(The prayer of the preceding evening was repeated. The spirit then resumed, addressing himself to the medium.)

“Forgive me for thus taking possession of you. Thanks for the relief you bring to my suffering. Forgive me, all of you, the trouble I have caused you; but I so much need to manifest myself; you alone can...”

“Thanks! Thanks! I am somewhat relieved; but I am not at the end of my trials. My victims will soon come back; that is my punishment; I have deserved it, O my God, but have pity on me!

“All of you pray for me! Pity me!”

LATOUR

A member of the Spiritist Society of Paris, who had prayed for this unhappy spirit and evoked him, obtained from him, at different times, the following communications:

I

“I was evoked almost immediately after my death, but I could not communicate at once, and a good many frivolous spirits took my name and place. I availed myself of the presence, at Brussels, of the President of the Paris Society; and, with the permission of the higher spirits, I was able to make a communication.

“I will come and communicate with the Society, and will begin the reparation of my faults by making some revelations that may serve as a warning to all criminals who shall read the recital of my sufferings.

“Sermons about hell-fire have little effect on the minds of great criminals, who are still less afraid of devils than of policemen. There is no priest who can say to them, ‘I have seen all that I tell you with my own eyes, I have witnessed the tortures of the damned!’ But, when I say, ‘This is what happened to me after the death of my body; this is what I underwent, when, to my horror, I found that I was not dead, as I had expected to be, and what I had mistaken for the end of my troubles was the beginning of tortures impossible to describe!’ Oh, then, more than one will draw back from the brink of the abyss into which he was about to fall; and every unhappy wretch whom I shall thus have stopped on the road of crime will be an atonement for an evil deed of my past! It is thus that good is brought out of evil, and that the goodness of God is manifested in all things, upon the Earth and in space.

“I am spared the sight of my victims, who have become my executioners, while I communicate with you; but, on leaving you, I shall see them again, and the mere thought of doing so causes me more misery than I can express! I rejoice to be evoked, because I then quit my hell for a few moments. Pray for me; pray to God that I may be delivered from the sight of my victims.

“Yes, let us pray together; prayer does so much good!...I feel less oppressed; my burden seems lighter. I see a gleam of hope before my eyes, and fully repentant I say: Bless be the hand of God, ‘His will be done.’”

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II

The Medium – Instead of beseeching God to deliver you from the sight of your victims, I advise you to join me in praying for strength to bear this expiatory torture.

Latour – I should have preferred being spared the spectacle of my victims. If you knew the suffering it causes me! The hardest heart would be touched by seeing the tortures I have to undergo. But I will do as you advise me. I see that it will enable me to complete my expiation sooner. It is like a painful operation that brings back health more quickly.

Ah! If the malefactors on the earth could see me, they would be terrified at the consequences of their crimes, which, even when hidden from the eyes of men, are always seen by spirits! How fatal is this ignorance to many an unfortunate creature! And how heavy is the responsibility of those who refuse education to the poor! They believe that, with the police force, they can prevent crime; what a mistake!

III

The sufferings I am undergoing are horrible; but, since you have helped me with your prayers, I feel that I am assisted by good spirits, who bid me hope. I understand the efficiency of the heroic remedy you have advised me to adopt, and I pray for strength to bear this heavy expiation. *It is the equivalent, I may truly say, of the evil I have done.* I would not endeavor to excuse my atrocities; but, at least, after the few moments of terror that, in the case of my victims, preceded the instant of death, all suffering ceased, for them, when once the crime was committed; and those who had finished their earthly trials entered directly upon the enjoyment of the happiness that was awaiting them. But, since my return to the spirit-world, I have never ceased, excepting for the few moments when I am permitted to communicate, to suffer the torments of hell.

The priests, notwithstanding the frightful pictures they draw of the sufferings of the reprobate, have but a very faint idea of the horror of the punishments that the justice of God inflicts on those of His children who have violated His law of love and kindness. How can they expect to make any reasoning creature believe that a *soul*, that is to say, something not material, can be made to suffer from the action of material fire? It is absurd; and that is why so many criminals laugh at their fantastic pictures of hell. But it is very different in regard to the moral torture undergone by the criminal, after the death of his body. Pray for me, that despair may not again take hold of me!

IV

How grateful I am to you for enabling me to obtain some glimpses of the glorious goal at which I shall arrive when I have accomplished my purification! I still suffer dreadfully, but less than I did. I cannot believe that, in the spirit-world, we suffer less from becoming accustomed to our suffering. No, it is because your kindly prayers have increased my strength, so that, *although my pains are still the same, yet, my strength being greater, my suffering seems to me to be less severe.*

My thoughts go back to my last existence, to the faults I should have avoided if I had known how to pray. I now comprehend the efficacy of prayer; I comprehend the strength of the simple and weak, as the world judges, who are so strong through their faith and piety; I understand this mystery, so little understood by those who are learned only in the science of earthly things. How these learned men laugh at the idea of prayer! Let them come back into the spirit-world; and, when the veil of flesh that shuts in their minds shall have been torn away from them, they, too, will prostrate themselves at

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the feet of the Eternal whom they had forgotten, and they will rejoice to abase themselves that they may be delivered from their errors and from the penalties of their misdeeds! They will then understand the virtue of prayer. To pray is to love; to love is to pray! They will then love the Master and will address to Him their prayers of love and gratitude; while undergoing the purification of suffering – for they will have to suffer – they will pray, like me, for strength to expiate and to bear their suffering; and, when they have ceased to suffer, they will pray out of thankfulness to Him for the pardon they will have won by their submission and resignation. Pray with me, my brother! That I may become still stronger!

V

Thanks to you, O my brother! For your charitable help! *I am forgiven!* The infinite mercy had delivered me from the sight of my victims. My God, eternity will be too short for me to express my gratitude for this favor that Thou hast granted me! I feel the enormity of my crimes, and I humble myself before Thy power! I love Thee, O my God! with all my heart, and I beg to be permitted, when Thy will shall send me back to the Earth to undergo a new trial, to go there as a missionary of peace and charity, to teach the children to pronounce Thy name with love and reverence, to teach them to love Thee, the Parent of all creatures! I am in the category of repentant spirits, and my repentance is sincere; for I love Thee as entirely as a heart so impure as mine is capable of feeling the sentiment that is the purest emanation of Thy divinity. Brother! Let us pray together, for my heart is overflowing with gratitude! I am free! I have broken my fetters! I am no longer reprobate! I am still a suffering spirit, but I am also a repentant one, and I would like that my example might arrest, on the eve of crime, the hands that I see ready to be raised for evil! Oh, stop, brothers, stop! For the tortures you are preparing for yourselves will be horrible! Do not fancy that you will all obtain your deliverance as quickly as I have done! Deliverance only comes, in most cases, after centuries of torture!

The Medium's Guide – You say you do not understand the spirit's last words. You must bear in mind the vividness of his emotion, the intensity of his gratitude to God, which he wants to testify by arresting the hands of all the criminals, whom he can see, though you cannot. He wants his voice to reach them all; and what he has not told you, because, as of yet, he does not know it himself, he will be allowed to undertake missions of reparation, and thus to commence the work of atonement for his former crimes. He will be sent among those who were his accomplices, and he will seek to inspire them with repentance and to rouse the germ of remorse in their hearts. If the veil that separates you from the other world could be drawn aside, you would often see a spirit, who has been the accomplice or the instigator of a crime, coming back among men, and trying, as will be done by Jacques Latour, to make reparation for his former misdeeds, by awaking remorse in the mind of malefactors in the flesh.

The medium in Brussels, who received the first communication from Latour, subsequently received from him the following, which we add to the foregoing, for its instructiveness, although its date was anterior to those marked IV and V:

“Be no longer afraid of me; I am calmer, though I still suffer very much. God, who saw my repentance, has taken pity on me; but I now suffer from this repentance that shows me the enormity of my crimes.

“If I had been guided aright in the earthly life, I should not have done all the evil that I did; but my bad tendencies were not repressed, and I obeyed them blindly, no rein having been opposed to them. If all men thought more of God, if only they all believed in His existence, such horrors would no longer be committed.

“But what men call justice is badly administered. For a fault that may have been slight, a man is shut up in a prison, which is always a place of perdition and corruption; and he generally comes out

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completely ruined by the evil counsels and bad examples to which he has been exposed. Even if his nature is good enough and strong enough to resist this evil teaching, he finds, on quitting the prison, that every door is closed against him, and that he is spurned and shunned by all honest people. What remains to him? Scorn and want. Hunger drives him again into crime. He begins, in his turn, to despise his fellow men and to hate them; he loses all sense of good and evil, because he finds himself repelled, notwithstanding his desire to return to an honest life. To procure the necessities of life, he steals; perhaps he kills; and then society puts him to death!

“My God! at this moment, I feel that my hallucinations are about to take hold of me; but I also feel that Thy hand is extending mercy to me, that Thy goodness is enveloping and protecting me! Thanks, O my God! In my next existence, I will employ my intelligence, all that I may possess, in aiding the unhappy culprits who have succumbed to a first temptation and in preserving them from falling again into crime.

“Thanks to you all, who do not feel reluctant to communicate with me! Fear nothing; you see that I am no longer wicked. When you give me a thought, do not think of me as resembling the portrait which was then drawn of me; but think of me as a poor sorrowing soul, who begins to hope, and who thanks you for your pitying kindness.

“Farewell: evoke me again, and pray for me.”

LATOUR

Consideration suggested by the case of Jacques Latour

It is impossible not to recognize the profundity and importance of the statements contained in the foregoing communication, which also offers the interesting spectacle of a spirit who, while undergoing the terrible retribution of great crimes, acquires, nevertheless, the perception of the mercy of the Divine Government. The mythological allegory of the Eumenides is seen to be less devoid of verisimilitude than has been thought; and the idea of demons, with horns and pitchforks, by which they are replaced, in modern creeds, as the official tortures of the invisible world, is seen to be far less reasonable than that of the victims of a criminal becoming, themselves, his chastisers.

Admitting the identity of this spirit, surprise may be felt at the promptitude with which his moral state was improved in the spirit-world; but we have frequently had occasion to remark that there is a better ground of improvement in a spirit who is roughly and brutally bad, than in one who is actuated by pride or hides his viciousness under the mask of hypocrisy. This prompt return to better sentiments indicates a nature that is *uncultured* rather than *depraved*, and that only needed better training. On comparing the language of this spirit with that of another criminal, mentioned further on, under the heading of “*The Chastisement of Light*,” it is easy to see which of the two is most advanced in a moral sense, notwithstanding the difference of their education and social position; one of them obeying a sort of natural instinct of unreasoning ferocity, while the other brings, to the perpetration of his crimes, the calmness and coolness of a slow and persevering combination, and, after death, listening only to his pride, stiffens himself against punishment. He suffers but will not confess that he does so; the other is, so to say, brought to his senses at once. It is easy to foresee which of the two will suffer the longest.

“*I suffer*,” says Jacques Latour, “*from this repentance, which shows me the enormity of my crimes*.” There is a profound truth in this remark. A spirit only arrives at the true comprehension of his misdeeds when he repents; repentance leads to regret, to remorse, to the painful feeling which is the transition from evil to good, from moral disease to moral health. It is to escape this painful feeling that perverse spirits stiffen themselves against the voice of their conscience, as a sick man sometimes rejects the remedy that would cure him; they try to keep up an illusion, to drown reflection by persisting in evil. Latour had reached the point at which obduracy finishes by yielding; remorse had entered his heart; repentance followed; he comprehended the extent of the evil he had done; he saw

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how abject he was, and he suffered in seeing it, which explains his saying “I suffer from this repentance.” In his preceding existence, he must have been still lower than in this one; for, if he had repented, then, as he has now done, his last life would have been a better one. The resolutions he has formed in the spirit-world will influence his next earthly life; the one he has quitted, criminal as it was, has therefore constituted for him a step in advance. It is probable that, before beginning his last life, he was, in errancy, one of the rebellious spirits, obstinate in evil, of which we see so many.

Many persons have asked what good can be derived from our past existences, since; in general, we remember neither what we have been nor what we have done?

This question is fully answered by the fact that, if the evil we have done in the past is effaced, if no trace of it remains in our heart, the remembrance of it would be useless, since we have nothing more to do with it. As to any remains of past evil of which we have not entirely cured ourselves, we may always know them by studying our present tendencies; it is therefore upon these that we should concentrate our attention. It is sufficient to know what we *are*, without its being necessary to know what we *were*.

When we consider how difficult it is for one who has been guilty of any crime to obtain a complete rehabilitation in the course of a lifetime, when we think of the reprobation of which he continues to be the object, we may well bless the Providential ordering that throws a veil over the past. If Latour has been sentenced to any terminable punishment, or even if he had been acquitted, his antecedents would have shut him out from the society of honest people. Who would have been willing, notwithstanding his repentance, to admit him to intimacy? The sentiments that he now manifests, as a spirit, warrant the hope that, in his next earthly existence, he will then be an honest man, esteemed and respected; but suppose it should be known that he was formerly the assassin Latour, he would still be the object of horror and abhorrence. The veil that will be thrown over his past will open to him the door of rehabilitation; thanks to it, he will be able to take his place, without shame, among honest people. How many are there, among those now living around us, who would be thankful to efface, at any price, certain years of their present life from the memory of those who know them! Let anyone, who can, show us a doctrine more admirably in harmony with the justice and goodness of God than that of our successive existences! And this doctrine, it must be remembered, is not a theoretic hypothesis, but has been arrived at as a result of observation. The spiritists have not imagined it; they have seen and observed the different situations in which spirits present themselves; they have sought for the explanation of these, and, from that explanation, they have deduced this doctrine. If they have accepted it, they have done so because it follows inevitably from the facts observed by them, and because it appears to them more rational than all the other doctrines that have hitherto been broached in regard to the future destiny of the soul.

It cannot be denied that the foregoing communications convey a very high moral teaching. The spirit of Latour, indeed, *must* have been aided in the reflections put forth by him and especially in the choice of his language, by spirits of greater advancement; but, in such cases, the latter only assist in regard to the *form* of the communications and not to their substance, nor do they ever cause the inferior spirit to make statements in contradiction with his state. They have no doubt aided Latour to give a more refined form to his expressions of repentance, but they would not have led him to express his repentance against his will; nor, indeed, could they do so, for every spirit has his free-will. They would merely help him to express the better sentiments that they saw to be germinating in his mind; and, by doing this, they would both contribute to the development of those sentiments and also attract towards him the commiseration of those to whom they helped him to address himself.

Could anything be more striking, more touching, more calculated to cause a vivid impression, than the picture of this great criminal, repentant, breathing forth his despair and his remorse, and – in the midst of his tortures and haunted by the incessant sight of his victims – raising his thought toward God and imploring His mercy? Does not such a picture offer a salutary example to the guilty? The

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nature of his anguish is perfectly comprehensible; his sufferings are at once rational, and nonetheless terrible for being simple and devoid of phantasmagoric accessories.

Perhaps one could be astonished at a so great a change in a man like Latour; for why should he not repent? Why should the guilty be doomed to remain such forever? Why should there not be a moment when light makes its way into the darkened heart, and why should that moment not have come for him? It is precisely this change in his feelings that gives so great a moral significance to his communications; it is the understanding which he has obtained of his true position, it is his regrets, his projects for making reparation, that render them so eminently instructive. Would it have been thought extraordinary if he had repented before he died? If he had said, before his execution, what he says afterwards? Are there not plenty of examples of such repentance?

The statements of Latour are a revelation to the wicked of what is awaiting them beyond the grave. He is perfectly right in saying that his experience is more likely to influence them than the prospect of hellfire or even of the scaffold. Why, then, should it not be made known in our prisons? It would lead more than one evildoer to serious reflection, as, indeed, it has already done in a good many instances. But how shall those believe in words of a dead man who suppose that when a man is dead there is an end of him? A day will come, however, when the fact that the dead *can* come to instruct the living will be fully admitted.

Many other important truths are to be deduced from these communications. In the first place, the confirmation of this principle of eternal justice, viz., that repentance does not suffice to place the guilty in the ranks of the happy. Repentance is a first step towards rehabilitation and attracts the mercy of God towards the guilty; it is the prelude to forgiveness and to the shortening of suffering; but God does not forgive unconditionally; He requires expiation and the making of reparation; Latour has understood this, and we see him preparing to fulfill these conditions.

In the second place, if we compare this criminal with the one of Castelnau, we perceive a great difference in the chastisements inflicted upon them. In the case of the latter, his repentance had been slower in coming, and his punishment has consequently been longer. This punishment, moreover, is almost physical, while, in the case of Latour, it is principally moral, for the reason, as we remarked above, that the intelligence is much less developed in the one case than in the other. In the one case, something was needed that could make an impression on a nature whose senses were obtuse; but moral sufferings are not less sharp for those who have reached the degree required for comprehending them, as is shown by the lamentations of Latour, the expression of a remorse that is speedily followed by repentance and by the desire to make reparation, in order to advance.

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Chapter VII

OBDURATE SPIRITS**LAPOMMERAY****The Chastisement of Light**

At a *séance* of the Paris Society, after a discussion on the confusion that generally follows death, a spirit to whom no allusion had been made and whom no one had thought evoking, manifested himself spontaneously by the following communication; though the latter was not signed, it was easily recognized as being made by a great criminal,⁸¹ who had just been executed.

“Why do you talk about confusion? Why these empty words? You are dreamers and visionaries. You are utterly ignorant of the things with which you pretend to busy yourselves. No, sirs! The confusion you speak of has no existence, excepting, perhaps, in your own brains. I am as really dead as possible, and I see with perfect clearness in myself, around me, everywhere! ...Life is a lugubrious comedy! Clumsy bunglers are they who get themselves driven from the stage, before the fall of the curtain! Death is a terror, a chastisement, and a desire, according to the weakness or the strength of those who fear, brave, or implore it. For all, it is a bitter mockery! Light *dazzles and pierces, like sharp arrows, the innermost recesses of my being*...They punished me with the darkness of the prison; and they thought to punish me with the darkness of the grave, or what is dreamed of as such by Catholic superstitions. But it is you, sirs, who are in darkness; and I, the socially degraded, I tower above you, and I mean to continue to do so! ...Strong in my self-possession, I disdain the pretended warning that resound about me...I see clearly...*Crime?* A mere word! Crime exists everywhere. When it is committed by masses of men, it is glorified; in private, it is scouted. Absurdity!

“I reject your pity...I ask for nothing...I suffice to myself; and I shall be able to resist *this odious light*.”

He who was yesterday a man

The very cynicism of this unhappy spirit is highly instructive, as is also the spectacle of his situation in the other life, which shows us a new phase of the punishment that awaits the guilty. While some of the latter are plunged in darkness or in solitude, continue to endure, for many years, the anguish of their last hour, or believe themselves to be still in this world, the light shines for this one; he has the full use of his faculties, he knows that he is dead; he makes no complaint, asks for no help, and braves the divine law, in the other world, as he braved human law down here. But does he therefore escape punishment? No; but the Divine justice takes effect in many ways, and what makes the joy of one spirit may make the torment of another. Light, of which the privation is the punishment of some, is the chastisement of this spirit; he stiffens himself against it, but, despite his pride, he avows the torment it causes him when he exclaims, “I suffice to myself; and I shall be able to resist this odious light”; and in this other phrase. The light obfuscates and penetrates me, as a sharp arrow, in my innermost being. These words, “the subtlety of my innermost being” reveals that the physical body is fluidic and penetrable to the Light that it cannot escape, and that the Light goes through him as a sharp arrow.

We have here classed this spirit among the obdurate because he remained a long time without showing any repentance; thus proving, once more, that moral progress does not always keep pace with

⁸¹ A systematic poisoner, a physician who had employed his professional position as a means to the accomplishment of the long tissue of horrible murders. – Tr.

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intellectual progress. Gradually, however, he began to improve; and, at a later period, he made many wise and good communications. His place is now among the repentant and progressing spirits.

Our spirit-guides, requested to give us their opinions upon this subject, dictated the three following communications, which are well deserving of careful attention.

I

Spirits in erraticity are evidently, in regard to the succession of existences, inactive, and in a state of waiting; but they may, nevertheless, expiate in that state, provided that their pride, the strong and restive tenacity of their errors, do not keep them back at the moment when they ought to be preparing to take a step in advance. You have a terrible example of this danger in the communication of the obdurate criminal who struggles against the grip of the Divine justice as he did against the justice of men. In such cases, their expiation, or, rather, the inevitable suffering that oppresses them, instead of benefiting them by making them understand the true meaning of their penalty, excites them to revolt, and to what the Bible, in its poetic eloquence, calls the grinding of teeth; a most expressive allegory, image of the suffering of those who, feeling themselves vanquished, refuse to submit! Who are overwhelmed with anguish, yet in whom the spirit of revolt refuses to recognize the fact of reward and punishment!

Great errors often persist for a considerable time in the spirit world; as well as the personal characteristics of the criminals. Their determination to be themselves in spite of everything, to parade their fancied independence in the presence of the Infinite, greatly resembles much of the blindness in men, who contemplates the stars, taking them as arabesques of the ceiling, as did the Gaelic of the time of Alexander the Great.

There is the infinity of the moral world; and miserable indeed must be the pettiness of the spirit who, continuing the abject struggles and boastings of Earth, sees no farther in the other world than he did in this one! The portion of such a spirit in blindness, contempt, mean and egotistic self-absorption, and the stoppage of every kind of progress. Oh man! It is a great truth that which states that between the immortality of a very pure name left on Earth and the immortality that spirits truly conserve through their successive trials, a secret concordance exists.

LAMENNAIS

II

If a man is plunged into darkness or into floods of dazzling light, is not the result the same? In either case, he sees nothing of what is around him; but his eyes will accustom themselves sooner to the darkness than to the excessive brilliance of the electric luminosity. The spirit in question has well depicted the suffering to which he is subjected by exclaiming: "Oh! I shall be able to deliver myself from this odious light!" In truth, this light is all the more terrible, all the more overwhelming, that it pierces him through and through, rendering his most secret thoughts visible to all. And this is one of the most torturing peculiarities of his spirit-punishment. He finds himself enclosed, so to say, in the glass-house demanded by Socrates, and the misery thus caused him is in itself instructive; for what would have been the joy and consolation of the sage becomes the ignominious and incessant punishment of the wicked, the criminal, the parricide, horrified at this manifestation of his own evil personality.

You can easily understand the distress and terror that must weigh upon him who, throughout his sinister existence, has taken pleasure in contriving and combining the most abominable atrocities in

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the depths of his mind, into which he retired as a wild beast to his den, and who now finds himself driven out from this secret hiding-place, in which he formerly shut himself up from the sight and investigations of his contemporaries. His mask of impassibility is now torn away, and every thought of his heart is reflected openly upon his brow!

Henceforward, there is no repose, no refuge, for this horrible criminal. His evil thoughts (and God knows how many are constantly being formed in his mind!) are visibly manifested in him and upon him, as though brought out by an electric shock. He tries to hide himself from the crowd about him, and the "odious light" renders him transparent to the sight of all! He tries to flee; he rushes, breathless and despairing, the incommensurable space; and still the light keeps pace with him! The eyes of those about him penetrate the innermost fibers of his being! He hastens forward incessantly in pursuit of shade, in search of night; but shade and night no longer exist for him. He calls death to his aid; but death is a mere word, devoid of meaning. The unhappy wretch flees forward incessantly! *He is on the road to spirit-madness*, a terrific chastisement, a fearful misery, in which he will struggle with himself to get rid of himself! For such is the supreme law of the realm beyond the earth, viz., that *the guilty spirit becomes his own inexorable chastisement*.

How long will this chastisement continue? Until his will, vanquished at last, shall bend under the pressure of remorse, and his haughty brow shall humble itself before his appeased victims and before the Spirits justice. Observe, finally, the supreme logic of the immutable laws; with it fulfilling what had been written in that proud communication, so clear, so lucid, and sadly, peaceful, by the Spirit who divulged it last Friday, freeing himself by an act of his own violation.

ERASTES

III

Human law takes no account of the individual peculiarities of those it chastises; making the crime itself the standard of criminality, it strikes indiscriminately all those who have committed any given offence, and punishes them all alike, without making any allowance for circumstances and for differences of education. The Divine Justice proceeds otherwise, and *its punishments correspond to the degree of advancement of those on whom they are inflicted*; for identity of crime does not necessarily imply equality of guilt in those by whom it has been committed, and the guilt of two men, who have done the same misdeed, may be differenced by the distance between the mental opacity of one at a lower degree of development, and the mental lucidity of the higher degree already attained by the other. In the latter case, the guilty spirit is punished, not by darkness, but by the intensity of spirit-light, which transpierces the soul that is defiled with terrestrial impurities and causes it to undergo torture analogous to that which is occasioned, in your world, by the probing of a wound.

The discarnate beings who are pursued by the visible and tangible representation of their crime are subjected to the shock of physical electricity, and may be said to suffer through the senses: those who are dematerialized by their intellectual advancement feel a species of pain that is far more intense, and that drowns their remembrance of *facts* in its floods of bitterness, leaving them only the knowledge of their *causes* to which the *facts* of the wrongdoing were due.

A man, notwithstanding the criminality of his acts, may be advanced intellectually; and, while led by his passions to act like a brute, he may be raised, by the sharpening of his mental faculties, above the thick atmosphere of the lower strata. The inequality of a spirit's progress in intellect and in morality produces frequent anomalies of this kind, especially during periods of materialism and transition.

The light that tortures the guilty soul is a spiritual ray that lets a flood of brightness into the most secret recesses of his pride, and shows him how small a thing is his personal individuality. The

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torments thus caused to him are the precursory symptoms of the approaching separation of the opposing elements of intellectuality and materiality that compose the primitive human duality and give rise to the warfare between its fleshly and its spiritual elements; a warfare that will cease with the duality which is its source, and which is destined to be succeeded by the glorious unity of the completed being.

JEAN REYNAUD

These three communications, obtained simultaneously at the same *séance* of the Paris Society, complete each other and present the subject of future punishment under an aspect that is, at once, novel, rational, and philosophical. It is probable that our Spirit-Guides, wishing to treat of this subject on the basis of a practical example, purposely induced the making of the unsought communication of the spirit to whom they refer.

Let the reader compare, with the picture of real life in the spirit-world just placed before him, the following description of "hell," by the preacher of the Lenten Sermons, at Montreuil-sur-Mer, in 1864:

"The fire of Hell is millions of times more intense than that of Earth; and if any one of the bodies that are burning therein without being consumed should be thrown out upon our planet, it would infect the globe from one end to the other! Hell is a vast and gloomy cavern, stuck all over with pointed nails, with keen, steely, sword-blades, with well-sharpened razors, into which are hurled the souls of the damned."⁸²

ANGÈLE A USELESS LIFE (Bordeaux, 1862)

A spirit who presented herself spontaneously to the medium

1. Do you repent of your faults?

A. No.

Q. Then why do you come to me?

A. To try to do so.

Q. Are you not happy?

A. No.

Q. Are you suffering?

A. No.

Q. What is wanting to you?

A. Peace.

Certain Spirits solely consider suffering as that which causes them to recall physical pain, but accepting at the same time that their moral state is intolerable.

2. How can you fail to have peace in the spirit-life?

A. Regret for the past.

Q. Regret for the past is remorse; then, you *do* repent?

A. No, but I dread the future.

Q. What are you afraid of?

A. The unknown.

3. Will you tell me what you did in your last existence? To do so will, perhaps, help me to enlighten you.

⁸² Vide « *Revue Spirite*, » July, 1864, p. 199.

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A. Nothing.

4. What was your social position?

A. Middling.

Q. Were you married?

A. Yes, and I had children.

Q. Did you fulfill your duties as a wife and a mother?

A. No, my husband wearied me, my children, also.

5. How did you employ your time?

A. In amusing myself, when I was a girl; in being tired of everything, when I grew up.

Q. What occupations had you?

A. None.

Q. Who, then, looked after your housekeeping?

A. The servant.

6. Is not uselessness the source of your present regrets and apprehension?

A. Perhaps so.

Q. It is not enough to make that admission. Will you, to atone for the uselessness of your life, help the guilty and suffering spirits around you?

A. In what way?

Q. By aiding them to grow better, with the help of your counsels and your prayers.

A. I don't know how to pray.

Q. We will pray together; that will show you how. Will you try?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. Fatigue.

COMMENTARY BY THE MEDIUM'S GUIDE

It is for the general instruction that we bring under your eyes the various degrees of suffering and of position of the spirits who are condemned to expiation, as the consequence of their faults.

Angèle was one of those creatures devoid of initiative, whose life is as useless to others as to themselves. Caring only for pleasure, incapable of finding, in the accomplishment of her duties to her family and to society, the affectionate satisfactions that alone can impart a charm to life, because they belong to all ages, she could only employ her youth in frivolous amusements; afterwards, when the time for serious duties had come, *she found emptiness around her, because there was only emptiness in her own heart.* Without any serious faults, but also without good qualities, she made her husband miserable, destroyed her children's comfort, and ruined their prospects, through her carelessness and negligence. She perverted their feelings and their judgment, both by her own bad example and by leaving them to the care of the servants whom she did not even take the trouble to choose with care. Her life was fruitless of good and therefore guilty, for evil comes from *the absence of good.* Study the Master's Commandments, meditate and understand that if you place a barrier that detains the evil path to the side, it will impulse you to retreat and to take the opposite path, conducive to righteousness. Evil is opposed to goodness; therefore, whoever desires to avoid it should follow the contrary path, without which, your life will be null and void, and your achievements shall be obscured. God, our Father, is not the God of the dead, but rather, God of the living.

Q. May I inquire what was the existence of Angèle previous to her last one? For the last must have been the consequence of the preceding one.

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A. She had lived in the stupid laziness and uselessness of a convent. Idle and selfish, she wished, in her last existence, to try family-life; but her spirit made very little progress. She constantly repelled the inner voice that warned her to her danger; the slope was easy, and she preferred to let herself slip into the gulf rather than make the effort to arrest her fall in time. Although she now sees the danger of this passivity, she has not yet acquired sufficient strength of purpose to make an earnest attempt to emerge from her slothful indifference. Pray for her; rouse her; force her to open her eyes to the light; it is a duty to do this; neglect nothing that can help to bring her into the right road.

Man was created to be active; the activity of the spirit is the essence, and the activity of the body is a necessity. Therefore, fulfill the conditions of that existence, as a spirit destined to eternal peace and as a body created for the service of the Spirit, a role in which the body is nothing but a machine subordinated to its intelligence. Work and cultivate your intelligence in order to effect a healthy stimulus to the instrument which it should help in the fulfillment of its task. Do not permit rest nor truce, and remember that the peace which is aspired shall only be conceded through work. Therefore, the greater the time that has been wasted in their task, the longer the duration of the anxiety for hope.

Work, therefore, incessantly; fulfill all your duties with zeal and perseverance, and let your faith sustain you in everything that you have to do. He who conscientiously accomplishes the most modest task, even though it be classed as the lowest and meanest according to your social fictions, is a hundredfold nobler, in the sight of the Almighty, than he who leaves to others the work which is incumbent upon himself. Duties are the rungs of the ladder by which we ascend to the supreme degree. Be careful to miss none of them; and remember that you are always surrounded by friends who hold out a helping hand to those who put their trust in the Almighty.

MONOD⁸³

A VICTIM OF BOREDOM (Bordeaux, 1862)

A spirit who announced himself spontaneously to the medium and asked to be prayed for

1. What has induced you to ask for prayers?

A. I am weary of wandering without an aim.

Q. Have you been long in this situation?

A. About one hundred and eighty years.

Q. What did you do upon the earth?

A. Nothing good.

2. What is your position among spirits?

A. I am among those who are the victims of boredom

Q. But that does not constitute a category?

A. Everything, among us, constitutes a category. Every sensation meets with its similar, and this sympathy brings us together.

3. Why have you remained so long without advancing, if you were not condemned to your present state as a punishment?

A. I was condemned to suffer boredom; it is a mode of suffering for us; whatever is not an enjoyment is, for us, a suffering.

Q. Have you, then, been obliged to remain errant against your will?

A. This question could only be answered by a reference to causes too subtle for your flesh-bound intelligence.

Q. Try to make me understand them; the effort will be a useful beginning for you.

⁸³Formerly an eminent Protestant Pastor of Paris.

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A. I could not do so, having no terms of comparison. An earthly life leaves, to the spirit who has made no good use of it, what fire leaves of the paper it has consumed; — *sparks*, reminding the still-untied but ashy tissue of what it was and of the cause of their own production, or, if you will, of the destruction of the paper. These sparks are the remembrance of terrestrial ties that run through the spirit until he has dispersed the ashes of his body. It is only then that he recovers possession of himself, as an ethereal essence, and desires to go forward.

4. What could have caused you the boredom of which you complain?

A. The consequences of an anterior existence. Boredom is the child of idleness. I knew not how to employ the long succession of years I had formerly passed upon the Earth; and the consequences of my inactivity still follow me in the spirit-world.

5. Cannot the spirits who, like you, are wandering a prey to boredom, put an end to that state when they will?

A. Not always, because their will is paralyzed by their state of boredom. They undergo the consequences of their previous existence; they have been useless, devoid of initiative, and they find no help from one another. They are abandoned to themselves until the weariness of this neutral state suggests to them the desire to change it. As soon as this desire begins to awaken in them, they find help and wise counsels that assist them to persevere in their effort to change their position.

6. Can you tell me anything of your earthly life?

A. Alas! There is little to tell of it, as you may easily understand. Boredom, inutility, idleness, come of laziness; laziness is the mother if ignorance.

7. Have you made no progress in your former lives?

A. I advanced a little in all of them, but very little; for all our lives are reflexes of one another. A spirit always makes some progress in an existence; but it is sometimes so slight as to be inappreciable by us.

8. While you are waiting to begin a new existence, would you like to come to me occasionally?

A. Call me, to compel me to come; you would be doing me a service.

9. Can you tell me why it is that your handwriting changes so often?

A. Because you ask me so many questions. It tires me and obliges me to get help.

The Medium's Guide – It is the exercise of his thought that tires him and obliges us to give him our help, that he may be enabled to reply to your questions. He is one of the lazybones of the spirit-world, as he was of the world of men. We have brought him to you, that you may try to draw him out of the apathy that is really a state of suffering, and one that is often still more painful than a sharper pain, for it may be prolonged indefinitely. Can you imagine a worse torture than the prospect of lassitude prolonged forever? The spirits *who seek a terrestrial existence only as an amusement* and to break the wearisome monotony of their spirit-life are, for the most part, of this category; they go back into the earthly life without any fixed determination to cultivate goodness, and they have therefore to begin that life over and over again, until, at length, they feel a sincere desire to advance.

THE QUEEN D'OUDE
(Died in France, in 1858)

1 – What have you felt since you left the terrestrial world?

A – *Still confused, it's impossible to explain.*

Q – Are you happy?

A – I miss life ... I don't know... I feel a sharp pain. I think that physical life would have liberated me from it. I wish my body could rise from the grave.

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2 – Do you feel bad for having been buried among the Christians and not in your own country?

A – Yes. The Hindu soil would be less heavy over my body.

Q – What do you think of the funeral honors that were bestowed on your remains?

A – They weren't such a big event. I was a Queen and not everyone bowed before me. Leave me alone... do not force me to talk. I don't want you to know what I am now... Be assured you that I was a queen.

3 – We respect your hierarchy; we insist only because we're looking to be educated. Do you believe that your son will recover the land and the heritage that his parents left him?

A – My blood will reign for sure; he is entitled to it.

Q – Is your opinion of your son's integration into society, the same that you had when you were alive?

A – My blood could not be mixed with the blood of the multitude.

4 – Your birthplace was not part of your death certificate; can you give us that information now?

A – I come from one of the noblest bloods of India. I think I was born in Delhi.

5 – You, who lived in the splendor of luxury, surrounded by honors, what do you think of all of this today?

A – That I have the right.

Q – Did your terrestrial hierarchy contributed to a more elevated rank where you are?

A – I continue being a Queen ... Let them send slaves to serve me! But I don't know ... it seems like they are not concerned with me here... and yet ... I am the same person.

6 – Are you a Muslim or a Hindu?

A – Muslim, however, I was too powerful to be concerned with God.

Q – Considering human happiness, what is the difference between your religion and Christianity?

A – Christianity is absurd; it teaches that we are all brothers and sisters.

Q – What is your opinion of Mohamed?

A – He was not the son of a king.

Q – Do you believe that he had a Divine mission?

A – Of what importance is that?

Q – What is your opinion of Christ?

A – The son of a carpenter is not worthy of occupying my thoughts.

7 – What do you think of this Muslim custom that women must hide their faces from masculine eyes?

A – I think that women were born to dominate: I was a woman.

Q – Were you envious of the freedom that European women enjoy?

A – No. Why should I care about their freedom? Don't they serve on their knees?

9 – Do you have any recollection of past lives, before the last one you just left?

A – I must have always been a queen.

Q – Why did you answer our call so promptly?

A – I didn't want to do it. I was forced. Do you by any chance, think that I would consider you worthy of my response? Who are you in comparison to me?

Q – Who forced you to come?

A – I don't know ... considering that there should not be anyone here more powerful than I.

10 – Under what circumstances did you come here?

A – Always as a queen, do you think that I could have stopped being one? You lack the proper respect. I inform you that this is not the way to talk to a queen.

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11 – If it were possible for us to see you. Would we see you with the appropriate jewels and ornaments?

A – Certainly.

Q – And how do you explain that having lost everything, you were able to keep these jewels and ornaments?

A – I haven't lost them. I am as beautiful as before and I don't understand your opinion of me. Truth is that you have never seen me.

12 – What do think of finding yourself in our midst?

A – If I could avoid it, I would. You treat me so disrespectfully.

ST. LOUIS

Leave her alone, poor disturbed soul. Take pity on her blindness and let it serve as an example. You don't know how much her pride harms her!

Considering the education given to women in that country, we did not expect wisdom when we evoked her. We expected to hear from this spirit, maybe not philosophy, but a more accurate view of reality. We thought we would hear maybe more common sense ideas than about vanity and terrestrial grandeur. Far from it, we saw a spirit who retained all the terrestrial prejudices as strong as ever. We noticed that her pride had not diminished with her passing. We noticed that she fought against her own weakness and that she was doomed to suffer a great deal for its impotence.

XUMÈNE

(Bordeaux, 1862)

A spirit who presented himself spontaneously, to the medium, accustomed to manifestations of this nature on the part of inferior spirits brought to him, by his Guide, for his own instruction and for their amendment.

Q. Who are you? Is this name that of a man or a woman?

A. Of a man, and one who is utterly miserable. I am undergoing all the torments of hell.

Q. Hell does not exist. How, then, can you be undergoing its torments?

A. A useless question.

Q. If I understand what you mean, an explanation of your words may be useful for others.

A. I don't care for them.

Q. Is not selfishness among the causes of your suffering?

A. Perhaps so.

Q. If you wish to be relieved from your misery, you must begin by getting rid of your evil tendencies.

A. Don't trouble yourself about them; they are no business of yours. Begin by praying for me, as you do for the others; we will see about the rest, by and by.

Q. If you do not help me by your repentance, prayer will avail you very little.

A. If you talk instead of praying, you will not do much towards helping me to advance.

Q. Do you really wish to advance?

A. Perhaps I do; I don't know. Let me see whether prayer relieves suffering; that's the essential thing.

Q. Well, then, join your mental action to mine, with the firm determination to obtain relief.

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A. Go ahead.

(After a prayer by the Medium.) – Q. Are you satisfied?

A. Not as I wish to be.

Q. A remedy, when first employed, cannot cure a disease of long standing.

A. May be so.

Q. Would you like to come again?

A. Yes, if you call me.

The Medium's Guide. – You will have a good deal of trouble with this hardened spirit; but there would not be much glory in saving those who are not lost. Courage! Persevere, and you will succeed. There are none so bad that they cannot be brought back into the right road by persuasion and example; for the most perverse must necessarily end by amending in course of time: if you do not succeed, at once, in bringing them back to better sentiments, which is often impossible, the labor you have bestowed on them is never lost. The ideas you have suggested to them stir their minds and make them reflect, in spite of themselves; they are seeds that will grow and fructify, sooner or later. A rock is not broken down by the first stroke of the pickaxe.

And what I have just said is equally true of spirits incarnate, and explains how it is that Spiritism, even among its firmest believers, does not always make people perfect all at once. Belief is the first step; the application of that belief comes next, and the transformation of character follows in its turn: but, in many cases, this transformation will only be accomplished, even by believers, after a new return into the spirit-world.

Among obdurate spirits, all are not entirely perverted and actively wicked. A great many of them, without trying to do much harm, lag behind through pride, indifference, or apathy. They are nonetheless unhappy, for they suffer all the more from their inertia because they have not the interests of the earthly life. The prospect of infinity renders their position intolerable, and yet they have neither the strength, nor the will, to change it. It is the spirits of this class who, when incarnated, lead idle and aimless lives, useless alike to themselves and to others, and who often end by committing suicide, without any serious motive, and simply from weariness and disgust of life.

Spirits of this character are usually more difficult to bring back to the path of progress than those who are decidedly and actively bad, because these latter, at least, possess energy, and, when once they have been made to see the truth, they are as ardent in the pursuit of goodness as they have been in the service of evil. Inactive spirits will doubtless need a good many existences before they can accomplish any marked amount of progress; but, little by little, vanquished by weariness, as others are vanquished by suffering, they will seek for sources of interest in active occupation which, in course of time, will become for them a necessity.

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Chapter VIII

TERRESTRIAL EXPIATIONS**MARCEL****“N° 4”**

In a provincial asylum, there was, a few years ago, a child about eight years of age, who was known only by the designation of “N° 4.” His state was one that can hardly be described. Such was his deformity – whether resulting from malformation or from disease – that his misshapen legs touched his neck; he was so emaciated that his bones protruded, literally, through his skin; his whole body was one continuous sore, and his sufferings were atrocious. He was of a poor Jewish family, and he remained in this sad state for four years. He was remarkably intelligent for his age; his gentleness, patience, and resignation excited the admiration of all about him. The physician, in whose ward he was, touched with compassion for the neglected little creature whose relatives came but seldom to see him, took much interest in him, often talked with him, and was so much charmed with the precocious intelligence of the poor little sufferer, that, when he could find a moment of leisure, he used to read to him, and was constantly surprised by the clearness of his comprehensions and the correctness of his judgment in regard to subjects apparently beyond his years.

One day, the little fellow said to him, “Doctor, please give me some more pills, like those you last ordered for me.” – “And why so, my child?” replied the physician; “those you have already taken were enough. I should be afraid of doing you harm if I gave you any more of them.” – “I wanted them,” returned the boy, “because I suffer so dreadfully that it is in vain I hold my breath not to groan, that I beg of God to give me strength to avoid disturbing the other patients who are near me; it is often impossible for me to help doing so. Those pills make me sleep, and while I sleep I disturb no one.”

That request suffices to show the elevation of the soul enclosed in that deformed body. Whence had the child derived such sentiments? It could not have been from the surroundings amidst which he had been brought up, and, besides, at the age at which he fell ill, he was still too young to understand any teaching on the subject, even had such been attempted; they must, therefore, have been innate in him. But, in that case, why, if he were born with such noble instincts, did God condemn him to a life so painful and so miserable? Why, if He created his soul at the same time as his body, did He create for him a body that could only be the instrument of such terrible suffering? We must either deny the goodness of God, or we must attribute this anomaly to some cause anterior to the formation of so miserable a body; that is to say, *the preexistence of the soul and the plurality of our lives*. The child in question died, and his last thoughts were of God and of the charitable physician who had taken pity on him:

Some time afterwards, having been evoked by the Paris Society, he gave the following communication (1863).

“You have called me; I have come, that my voice, passing beyond these walls, may strike other hearts, and may say, to those who hear me, that the sorrows of Earth are a preparation for the joys of heaven; – that suffering is only the bitter rind of a delectable fruit, when borne with courage and resignation; – that, on the hard and narrow bed of pain and poverty, are often to be found the envoys of the Most High, whose mission is to teach men that there is no suffering which they cannot bear with the help of God and of their good-spirits; and that the groan wrung from them by pain, but mingled with the accents of prayer and of hope, offer a harmony of very different augury from that of the rebellious complaints that are mixed with the utterances of rage and blasphemy!

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“One of your Guardian-spirits, a great apostle of Spiritism,⁸⁴ has kindly given me his place, this evening, in order that I may say a few words respecting the progress of your doctrine, which is destined to aid all those who are incarnated among you in accomplishment of their mission, by teaching them how to suffer. Spiritism will be the guide-post that will show them their way; it will teach them, both by reasoning and by example; and the sighs of those who have accepted a mission of suffering will thenceforth be changed into songs of gladness.

Q. It would appear, from what you have just said, that your sufferings were not an expiation of the faults of a former existence?

A. They were not a direct expiation, but be very sure that there is a just cause for every sorrow. He, whom you have known so deformed and so miserable, was a formerly handsome, great, rich, the object of general adulation; I had my flatterers and my courtiers; I was vain and haughty. I was very guilty, for I forgot God and wronged my fellow men. But I had expiated that life by terrible sufferings, first in the spirit-world, and then upon the Earth. What I endured, in my past life, during a few years only, I had already endured in a previous life, from infancy to extreme old age. Through repentance, I was at length restored to the favor of the Lord, who deigned to confide to me various missions, the last of which is known to you. I had solicited it, in order to finish the work of my purification.

Farewell, my Friends; I shall return sometimes among you. My mission is not to instruct but to console; there are so many who suffer in your world, and who will be very glad of my visits.

MARCEL

COMMENTARY OF THE MEDIUM’S GUIDE

Poor little sufferer, puny, ulcerated, and deformed! How sad was his situation in that refuge of wretchedness and tears! And yet, despite his youth, how resigned he was, how well he understood the true aim of suffering. He felt, intuitively, that a reward was awaiting him, beyond the grave, for so many complaints repressed! And how fervently did he pray for those who had not, like him, the courage to bear their sufferings, for those, especially, who hurled blasphemies against Heaven, instead of praying!

Though the agony of this sufferer was prolonged, his departure was easy. Those who stood round him beheld a little deformed body struggling convulsively against death, in obedience to the instinct of the flesh that clings to life up to the very last moment; but an angel hovered above the couch of the dying child, breathing words of encouragement and hope, and, when all was over, he bore away, in his loving arms, the purified soul that had quitted the wretched body, whispering, “Glory to God!” with its latest sigh. And this soul, ascending towards the Almighty, radiant and happy, cried joyously, “Behold me, O Sovereign Ruler! Thou gavest me the mission of showing how men should suffer! Have I fulfilled that mission worthily?”

And now, the spirit of the suffering child has regained its true proportions; he speeds through space, with the power and the brightness of the sunbeam, visiting the weak and the humble, and saying, to their hearts, “Hope and Courage!” Freed from the materiality and purified from the soil of the past, he is near you, addressing you, no longer with the painful and plaintive voice of his last incarnation, but in clear and resonant accents; and he says to you, “Those who saw me upon the Earth beheld a child who bore his load of suffering without a murmur; from his patience they learned to bear their own sorrows with resignation, and their hearts were filled with confidence in God. Such was the aim of my short sojourn upon the Earth.”

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

⁸⁴ St. Augustine, through the medium by whom he habitually communicates with the Society.

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SZYMEL SLIZGOL

He was a poor Jew of Wilna, who died in May 1865. For thirty years he begged in the streets, a little wooden bowl in his hand. Everybody in the town was familiar with his cry: *“Remember the poor, the widows, and the orphans!”* During that time, Slizgol collected 90,000 rubles; but he never kept a single kopek for himself. He took care of the sick, whom he tended with his own hands; he paid for the schooling for destitute children; he divided the food given him among the needy. His nights were spent in making snuff, which he sold for his own living; and whatever remained from this modest source of gain, after providing for his wants, he gave to the poor. He was alone in the world; but, on the day of his funeral, all the shops were shut, and the greater part of the population of the town followed his bier.

(Spiritist Society of Paris, June 15th, 1865)

(Evocation) – A. Very happy, and having reached, at length, through long effort, the height of my ambition, I have been in your midst, since the beginning of the meeting. I thank you for thinking of the poor beggar who will do his best to reply to your questions.

Q. A letter from Wilna has informed us of the leading peculiarities of your life. The sympathy that these have excited in our minds has prompted the desire to converse with you. We thank you for coming at our call, and we shall be interested in learning your position in the spirit-world and the motives that decided the character of your last existence.

A. Let me, first of all, say a word in reference to the surprise that has been expressed – not here, nor by Spiritists, but elsewhere – at the imposing proportions of the manifestation of respect and sympathy that accompanied, to their last resting-place, the mortal remains of the poor beggar whose charity had won for him an appreciation, so unusual, on the part of his fellow-townsmen. I am not saying this for your sake, dear teacher, nor for you, esteemed medium, nor for you, true and sincere spiritists, but rather, I am speaking to all those who are indifferent to the teaching. There is really nothing in such a fact that should create astonishment. The practice of kindness makes, even on the minds of the most materialistic, and impression that never fails to manifest itself by marks of respect; even those who do wrong in their own persons pay homage to goodness in the person of another.

Let us now direct our response to your questions, since coming from you, do not arise out of curiosity, but rather, are formulated solely for the purpose of general instruction. I now haste to reply, as briefly as may be, to your question concerning the causes that decided the choice of my last existence.

Several centuries ago, I lived on this Earth with the title of King, or, at least, of a Sovereign Prince. Within the limits of my power – narrow in comparison with the States of the present day – I was the absolute master of the lives and fortunes of my subjects. I was their tyrant, or, to speak more correctly, their torturer and their executioner. I was imperious, violent, grasping, and sensual; you may imagine what was the fate of the unhappy people subjected to my sway. I employed my power to oppress the weak, and I imposed taxes on every sort of industry and of labor, on all passions, and on all sorrows, for the pampering of my vices. I carried my greed to the extent of establishing a tax on begging; no starving wretch could hold out his cap to the passers, but I took from him the greater part of the alms that had been thrown to his misery. I did even worse; in order not to lessen the number of beggars among my subjects, I forbade the wretched recipients of charity to give, to their friends or relations, any part of the pittance left to them by my exactions. In a word, I was utterly pitiless for suffering and misery.

I lost, at length, what you call “life,” in horrible torments; my death was a subject of terror for all those who, on a smaller scale, imitated the atrocities of my rule. I remained a wanderer, in the spirit-state, for three centuries and a half; and when, after this lapse of time, I had come to understand

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that the aim of incarnation is something very different from that which my gross and obtuse senses had caused me to pursue, I obtained – by dint of prayers, resignation, and regrets – the permission to undertake the task of enduring, in a new earthly life, the sufferings I had inflicted on others. I obtained, also, the permission to add, of my own accord, to the moral and physical tortures of the life I had chosen. Thanks to the higher spirits who gave me their help, I persisted in my resolve to suffer with patience and to devote myself to doing good.

Since then, I have been enabled to accomplish another existence, which, through its abnegation and charity, has redeemed the cruelty and injustice of my past. I was born in poverty; left an orphan very early, I learned to shift for myself at an age at which a child is usually supposed to be incapable of acting with discernment. I passed my life alone, without love, without affections; and I had to bear, in my childhood, the brutalities I formerly wreaked upon others. You have been told that I devoted the whole of the money I collected by begging to the relief of my fellow-creatures; such was the case; and I may add, without vanity, that I often imposed on myself very severe privations, in order to increase the amount of good which the charity of the public enabled me to do.

My death was peaceful; for I knew that I should obtain the recompense of my abnegation, and I am rewarded, in truth, beyond my most sanguine aspirations. I am very happy to be able to assure you, from my own experience, that, while it is true that “he who exalteth himself shall be abased,” it is equally true that “he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Q. We beg you to tell us the nature of your expiation in the spirit-world, the length of time that elapsed between your death and the period when your fate was modified by the effect of your repentance and of the good resolutions that you had formed, and the cause of the change that took place in your ideas in the spirit-state?

A. You recall to my mind very painful images! How horribly I suffered! But I do not complain; *I only remember!* You wish to know in what my expiation consisted; listen to the recital of it, in all its horror!

Having been, as I told you, the torturer and the executioner of all around me, I remained for a long, long time attached by my perispirit to my decaying body; and I felt, until its putrefaction was complete, the gnawing of the worms that were devouring it! When, at last, I was delivered from the bonds that had attached me to the instrument of my punishment, I was subjected to another, even more terrible. After the physical suffering I endured, the moral suffering overcame me. This was lengthier than the first. I was brought into the presence of all the victims on whom I had wreaked my cruelty. Periodically, and under the action of a force greater than my own, I found myself face to face with all my evil deeds. I saw, physically and morally, all the sorrows and sufferings that I had caused to be endured. Oh! Friends, how terrible is the constant sight of those whom we have wronged! You have a slight example of this, among yourselves, in the confrontation of the assassin with his victim.

Such is, in short, what I suffered for two centuries and a half; until God, taking pity on my grief and my repentance, and solicited to that end by the guides who assisted me, permitted me to undertake the life of expiation of which I have told you.

Q. Had you any special reason for choosing to be born as a Jew in your last incarnation?

A. I was advised to do so by my guides. The quality of a Jew added another humiliation to my life of expiation, for Jews are generally despised, and, especially, Jewish beggars.

Q. In your last existence, how old were you when you began to put in practice the resolutions you had taken in the spirit-world? How did the thought of doing so arise in your mind? While you were practicing charity in that way, and with so much abnegation, had you any intuition of the cause that had led you to adopt such a life?

A. My parents were intelligent, but very poor and avaricious. While still very young, I was deprived of the affection and caresses of my mother. My grief for her death was all the deeper because I was entirely neglected by my father, who was absorbed in his desire of gain. My brothers and sisters, all older than myself, seemed to be quite unaware of my sufferings. Another Jew, moved rather by

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selfishness than by charity, took me onto his house and taught me his trade. He recouped himself, largely, from the proceeds of my labor (which often exceeded my strength), for that I cost him. After a time, I threw off this yoke, and worked on my account. But whether I was working or resting, the remembrance of my mother's caresses followed me everywhere; and the older I grew, the more deeply that remembrance became engraved in my memory, and the more sadly did I miss her care and affection.

Soon, I remained the only one of my name; death carried away every member of my family in the course of a few months. It was then that the way in which I was to pass the rest of my existence began to be revealed to me. Two of my brothers had left orphans. Moved by the remembrance of what I had suffered, I wished to preserve the poor little creatures from a childhood such as mine had been; and, as my labor was not sufficient to keep us all, I began to beg, not for myself, but for them. But I was not to be allowed the consolation of succeeding in my efforts; the poor little things left me forever. I saw clearly what they had lacked; it was their mother. I therefore determined to implore the charity of the public for the unfortunate widows who, unable to maintain themselves and their children, impose upon themselves privations that send them to their grave, leaving poor little orphans who remain abandoned to the same torments that I myself had endured.

I was thirty years of age when, in the prime of strength and health, I began to beg for the widow and the orphan. The beginning of this work was very painful to me, and I had to bear many a humiliating taunt. But when it came to be seen that I really divided among my poor pensioners all that I collected in their name, when it was known that I added to this the surplus of my labor, I acquired a sort of consideration that was not without its charms.

I lived for over sixty years, and never did I fail in the task I had taken upon myself. Nor did any inner consciousness ever led me to suppose that a motive, anterior to the life I was then living, was the mainspring of my action. One day, however, before I began to beg, I heard these words, "Do not, unto others, what you would not that others should do unto you." I was much struck with the wide moral reach of these words; and I often found myself supplementing them, thus, in my own mind: – "But do unto others, on the contrary, whatever you would that they should do unto you."⁸⁵ Sustained by the remembrance of my mother and of my lonely and neglected childhood, I continued to walk in the path that my conscience told me was the one for me to follow.

I bring this long communication to an end by repeating "Thank you!" I am not yet perfect; but, knowing that evil leads only to evil, I shall again devote myself to doing good, as I have done already, knowing that I shall thus prepare for myself a harvest of happiness.

SZYMEL SLIZGOL

JULIENNE-MARIE **Nicknamed *the Beggar-woman***

In the *Commune* of La Villate, near Nozai (Loire-Inferieure), there was a poor woman named Julienne-Marie, old, infirm, who lived by begging. One day, she fell into a pond, from which she was rescued by a physician of the place, who was in the habit of giving her alms. Carried home, she died from the effects of the accident. It was generally supposed that she had tried to drown herself. On the very day of her death, the physician who had rescued her from the water, and who is a spiritist and a medium, felt a sensation, which he could not account for, over his whole person, as though some one had rubbed against him in passing; when he learned the death of "The Beggar-woman," it occurred to him that her spirit probably came to him at the time.

⁸⁵ Born a Jew, and left without education, he seems not to have known "The Golden Rule" as spoken by Christ. – Tr.

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At the suggestion of one of his friends, who was a member of the Spiritist Society of Paris, and to whom he had spoken of the sensation he had felt – he evoked the woman, with a view to being useful to her; but, before doing so, he asked the advice of his guides, who gave him the following reply: –

“You may evoke her, and your doing so will give her pleasure, but she has no need of the help you are wishing to give her; she is happy, and devotedly grateful to all who formerly took pity on her. You are one of those whom she loves the most; she scarcely leaves you, and she often talks to you without your knowing it. Sooner or later, every service is rewarded, either by the spirit to whom it has been done, or by those who are interested on his behalf; while a spirit is still in the state of confusion, other spirits who are in sympathy with him, testify their gratitude in his name. This explains what you felt on the day of her death. She, herself, now helps you in all the good you do to others. Remember Christ’s words: ‘He who humbleth himself shall be exalted;’ and you may infer the greatness of the services she is now able to render you, provided you only ask her help in being useful to those about you.”

Q. Good Julianne-Marie, I rejoice to know that you are happy; it was all that I wished to know; but I shall often think of you, and I shall never forget you in my prayers.

A. Put your trust in God, inspire your patients with the same trust, and your treatment will almost always be successful. Do not trouble yourself about the recompense you will receive; it will be more than you ever hoped for. God always knows how to compensate where it is justified, whoever dedicates himself to alleviate the pain of his fellow man, and does so, without any ulterior motive. Otherwise it would be no more than an illusion. But, prior to anything, it is necessary to have faith, as without it nothing can be achieved. Remember this maxim and you will be surprised by the results you will obtain. Proof of this is in the two patients that you cured. Under these circumstances, solely with the medication, you would have failed.

When you ask God to permit the good spirits to radiate His beneficial energy over you, if this petition does not produce an involuntary trembling, it is because your prayer has not been sufficiently fervent to be heard. They will only be effective under the conditions that I’m going to recommend. These are the prayers that have produced the sensations that you have experienced, by saying from the bottom of your heart: “All Powerful God, Merciful God, God of Infinite Kindness, please hear my prayer and permit the Good Spirits to assist me in the cure of ...; Take pity on him, Dear God, and provide him health. Without You I am helpless. Let your will be done.”

You have done well not to neglect the humble; the voice of him who has suffered with resignation in your world is always listened to in this one; and, as you see, by the help I am permitted to promise you, no service ever goes unrewarded. I now add a word about myself, which will confirm all that I have just stated.

Spiritism explains to you the language I address to you as a spirit; it is useless to enlarge on that point, or to inform you of the existences I had undergone before the one in which you knew me. That last one should suffice to convince you that those previous ones had not been always irreproachable. Through the whole of my last life, doomed to poverty, infirm, and unable to work, I subsisted by begging. I put nothing by; in my old age, all my savings amounted to only a hundred francs, which I had scraped together for the time when I should no longer be able to crawl after alms. When my trial and my expiation were considered sufficient by God, I was mercifully recalled from the miseries of the earthly life; for I did not commit suicide, as has been thought. I died suddenly, on the edge of the pond, just when I had been praying to God; the presence of my body in the water was due, simply, to the slope of the ground where I fell.

I did not suffer in dying; and I rejoice to have fulfilled my mission without revolt and with resignation. I was useful, to those around me, in the measure of my strength and of my means; and I wronged no one. I am now rewarded for my fidelity: and I thank God, our Divine Master, who softens

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the bitterness of our trials by causing us, during life, to forget our former existences, and by placing, upon our road, charitable souls who aid us to bear the load of our past wrongdoing.

Do you, also, persevere; and like me, you will be rewarded. I thank you for the service you rendered me; I shall never forget it. We shall meet again; and many things will then be explained to you; at present, such an explanation would be superfluous. Know, only, that I am entirely devoted to you; and that I shall always be near you when you need my aid in assisting those who suffer.

The Beggar-woman, JULIENNE-MARIE

The spirit of Julianne-Marie, having been evoked by the Paris Society, in June 1864, dictated the following communication: –

“Thanks, dear Friends, for admitting me into your midst! You have perceived that my social position, in my former existences, was higher than my last. It was through my vain pride, which led me to repel the poor and the miserable, that I incurred the necessity of coming back to the Earth to undergo the law of retaliation, as the most miserable beggar in all the countryside! Yet, even in this depth of wretchedness, as though to prove to me the goodness of God, I was not rejected by all, as I feared to be; and the kindness of the few enabled me to bear my lot without murmuring, sustained by a latent hope of a happier life, from which I should not again have to return to this Earth of exile and calamity.

“What happiness, when our soul, ever young, returns into the spirit-world and rejoins those it loves! This joy is mine; for I have loved, and I am delighted to have met again with those who had preceded me into the spirit-world. My thanks to Dr. A——, whose mediumship has opened to me the door of gratitude; for, without it, I could not have expressed my thankfulness nor have shown him that I do not forget the consoling influence of his excellent heart. Let him be diligent in propagating his divine belief; he is appointed to bring many a wanderer back to the right road. Let him count on my help; I will return to him a hundred times all his kindness to me, by aiding him to advance on the path he has chosen. Be thankful to the Divine ordering that permits the denizens of the spirit-world to come to you, to encourage the poor in bearing his troubles and to arrest the rich in his pride. Try to comprehend the baseness of repelling the unfortunate; let my example be a warning to you, that you may not have, like me, to come back to the Earth and to expiate your wrongdoing by occupying the painful social positions that bring you down so low, and that place you amidst the refuse of society.”

JULIENNE-MARIE

This communication having been transmitted to Dr. A_, he obtained from her, in response to his evocation, the following, which confirms it:

Q. My kind Julianne-Marie, you have the desire to assist me with your good advice, in order to aid my progress on the path of our Divine Doctrine. Would you please communicate with me; I will do my best to take advantage of your teachings.

A. “Remember my counsels, and follow them steadily. Be always charitable to the utmost extent of your means; I need not enlarge on this duty, for you already understand how charity should be practiced in all the relations of human life. There is no need for me to come to give you a teaching on this subject. You, alone, will be the best judge, following always the voice of your conscience, which will never fool you when you listen with sincerity.

Don’t be misguided with the mission that you feel that you must fulfill. Small or large, each one has his own mission. Mine was hard to bear, but I deserved such punishment due to my prior existences. As I confess to the president of the main Society of Paris, which all shall join someday. That day is not as distant as believed, because Spiritism proceeds with giant steps, in spite of all the hindrances that are placed in its path. Go forth, therefore, without fear, fervent followers of the doctrine and your efforts will be crowned by success. What do you care what is said about you? Place yourselves above the insolent criticism, which will fall, finally, over the same adversaries of Spiritism.

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“Proud ones,” they think that they are strong and that they can beat you easily. And you my good friends remain at ease, and don’t fear an encounter with them, as they are easier to beat than you think. Many are fearful that the truth will overpower them. Be patient, as they will return, in time, to collaborate in the crowning ceremony of the building.”

JULIENNE-MARIE

These three communications are exceedingly instructive, for they inculcate and confirm all the great principles of the spiritist doctrine. In the very first of these utterances, the spirit of her who was a mendicant upon the Earth shows her real superiority by the elevation of her language; like a beneficent fairy, the poor beggar-woman, resplendent and metamorphosed, extends her protection over him who had been charitable to her when her true personality was hidden under the rags of her earthly expiation. It is a practical exemplification of the assurance of the Gospel, *“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be debased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Blessed are the humble; blessed are the afflicted for they will receive consolation,”* and shows us that we should despise no one, but should remember that he, who seems to be one of the least in the earthly life, may be great and noble in the spirit-world.

COUNT MAX THE BEGGAR

In a village in Bavaria there died, about 1850, an old man, nearly a hundred years old. No one knew anything certain about his origin, for he had no family. During more than half a century, broken down with infirmities that rendered it impossible for him to earn a livelihood by any kind of labor, he had no other resource than the charity of the public, to which he appealed by creeping about among the manor-houses and farms of the neighborhood, offering almanacs, matches, and other small objects, for sale. The whole countryside had given him the nickname of “Count Max;” the children never addressed him in other way. Why did people call him by this title? Nobody knew; but it had become a habit with everybody. Possibly, it might have suggested, in the beginning, by the refinement of his countenance and manners, which offered a marked contrast with the squalor of his rags. Several years after his death, he appeared, in a dream, to the daughter of the owner of one of the castles in which, whenever he called with his wares, the servants used to give him a good supper and a night’s lodging upon clean straw in the stables, for he had no abode of his own. Addressing the lady, he said to her: – Thanks for having remembered poor Max in your prayers, they have been heard by the Lord. You wish to know whom I am, O charitable soul, who took pity on the wretched merchant! I come to gratify your wish; my history will be an instructive lesson for all who learn it.”

Continuing to address the lady, he continued his recital as follows: –

“A century and a half ago, I was the rich and powerful lord of this region; I was vain, haughty, and infatuated on the score of my nobility. My enormous wealth was employed only on my pleasures, for which, large as it was, it hardly sufficed; for I was a gambler and a rake, and I spent my time in a succession of orgies. My vassals, whom I regarded as having been created for my use, like so many beasts of burden, were crushed and ground into the dust to pay for my prodigality. I remained deaf to their complaints as to those of all who were poor and friendless, considering that they ought to esteem themselves greatly honored by serving my caprices. I died young, exhausted by every kind of excess, but without having experienced any great misfortunes. On the contrary, everything had seemed to go well with me, so that I was looked upon as one of Fortune’s favorites. On account of my rank, my funeral was very splendid; the high-livers whom I admitted to my intimacy regretted me as a lavishly-hospitable and magnificent host; but not a tear was shed over my tomb, not a prayer was sent up for

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my soul, and my memory was cursed by all those whose misery had been intensified by my exactions and my crimes. Ah! How terrible is the malediction of those whom we have rendered wretched! Their reproaches and their curses sounded perpetually in my ears during long years that seemed to me an eternity! And at the death of each of my victims, a new face, threatening or ironical, rose before me and pursued me incessantly, and I was not able to find a corner in which to hide myself from his view! Not a single kindly glance did I ever meet with; my former companions in debauch, as miserable as I, fled from me and seemed to say, contemptuously, "You have no longer wherewith to pay for our pleasures!" What would I not have given for a moment's repose, for some obscure hiding place in which to take refuge from the shame and the regrets that were devouring me! But I had no longer anything to give; *all the gold that I had scattered by handfuls upon the Earth had failed to produce a single benediction!*

"At length, weary, worn out, exhausted, like the wanderer, who, harassed and foot-sore, sees no end to the road before him, I cried aloud, "My God, take pity on me! When will this horrible situation come to an end!" Then a friendly voice, the first I had heard since I quitted the Earth, replied, "*When you will it.*" – "What must I do, great God?" I cried again, "tell me! I am ready to submit to everything!" – "You must repent," again replied the voice; "*you must humble yourself before those whom you have humbled; you must beg them to interceded for you; for the prayer of the injured who forgives is always favorably listened to by the Supreme Judge.*" I humbled myself; I sought the forgiveness of my vassals, of my servants, of all my victims, whose faces, gradually losing their expression of anger and becoming more and more benevolent, at length disappeared altogether. No words could express the joy of that moment! I seemed to have begun a new life; hope took the place of despair; and I thank God for that deliverance with all the energy of my soul. The voice afterwards called to me: "Prince!" and I replied, "There is no other Prince here than the Almighty, who abases the proud. Forgive me, O God! for I have sinned; make me the servant of my servants, if such be Thy will!"

"Some years afterwards, I was born again upon the Earth; but, this time, in a family of poor villagers. My parents died while I was still a child, and I was left helpless and alone. I got my living as I could, sometimes as a workman, sometimes as a farm-servant, but always honestly, for, this time, I believed in God. At the age of forty, an attack of disease deprived me of the use of my limbs; and I was obliged to beg, for fifty years, on the soil of which I had formerly been the absolute master; receiving with thankfulness a morsel of bread at the door of the farms which formerly belonged to me, and where, by the bitter mockery, they had nicknamed me "The Count," and only too glad to find shelter, from time to time, in the stables of the castle that had formerly been my abode. In my sleep, I took pleasure in wandering over the stately abode of which I was formerly the haughty master! How many a time, in my dreams, did I see myself once more surrounded by my former splendor! These visions left with me, on waking, an indefinable feeling of bitterness and regret; but no complaint ever escaped my lips, and, when it pleased God to call me back into the spirit-world, I blessed Him for having given me the strength to submit, without murmuring, to the long and painful trial of which I am now receiving the reward. "To you, noble Lady, I thank you for having prayed for me!

We commend this history to those who imagine that there would be nothing to restrain men from crime, if they no longer had before their eyes the bugbear of eternal punishment; and we ask them whether the prospect of such a chastisement as that of "Count Max, the Beggar," is less likely to arrest them on the road of evil than the threat of endless physical tortures in which so many have ceased to believe?

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HISTORY OF A FOOTMAN

In a family of high rank, there was a young footman, whose refined and intelligent countenance and distinguished air attracted our attention. Nothing, in his appearance or manners, indicated the inferiority of his condition; even the zeal with which he fulfilled the duties of his position was something quite different from the obsequiousness habitual among those of his calling. The following year, being again on a visit to the same family, we missed the young footman; and, having inquired after him, we were informed by our host that he had left them, for a few days, to go home to his family, had fallen ill there, and had died, almost immediately. “We greatly regret his loss,” added Mr. de G——, “for he was an excellent fellow, and animated by sentiments *altogether above his position*. He was extremely attached to us, and had given us proofs of the utmost devotedness.”

Some time afterwards, it occurred to us to evoke this young man; here is what he told us: —

“In my last incarnation before the one in which you knew me, I belonged, as you say upon the Earth, to a very good family; but, ruined by my father’s extravagance, I was left an orphan, at an early age, utterly destitute. A friend of my father’s took me into his house, brought me up as his son, and gave me an excellent education, of which I was somewhat too vain. This friend is now reincarnated as Mr. de G——, in whose service you saw me. I had determined to expiate my former pride by being born, in my new existence, in a servile position, a determination that afforded me the opportunity of proving my gratitude to him who had been my benefactor in my previous incarnation. I even had the happiness of saving his life. This humble existence has been very useful to me. I possessed sufficient strength of character to avoid being corrupted by the contact of surroundings that are almost always vicious; and I thank God that I thus earned the happiness I now enjoy.”

Q. In what way did you save Mr. de G——’s life?

A. He was out riding, one day, alone; I followed him, riding a little in his rear, when I saw that a large tree was on the point of falling, close beside him, without his being aware of it. I shouted to him with all my might; he turned his horse quickly towards me, and as he did so, the tree fell across the road, on the very place where he would have been had my cry not called him back. But for the backward movement I had thus caused him to make, the tree would have crushed him.

Mr. de G——, to whom this statement was reported, perfectly remembered the incident.

Q. Why did you die so young?

A. My trial had reached its appointed term.

Q. What profit could you derive from that trial, since you had no remembrance of the motive that led you to undertake it?

A. Notwithstanding my humble position, I was conscious of a feeling of pride that I was happily able to master, so that the trial was really beneficial to me; otherwise, I should have to begin it over again. My spirit remembered the past in its moments of liberty,⁸⁶ and there remained with me, on waking, an instinctive desire to resist a feeling that I saw to be wrong. This struggle with an evil tendency was more effectual than it would have been if I had preserved a clear recollection of my past. The remembrance of my former existence would have kept up my pride, and would have interfered with the discharge of my new duties; instead of which, I had only to resist the evil tendencies inherent in my new position.

Q. You had received a brilliant education; of what use was it to you, in your last life, since you had no remembrance of the knowledge you had formerly acquired?

A. In my new position, that knowledge would have been not only useless, but in my way, and it was therefore allowed to remain latent, for the time being; but I have now regained the memory of all that I formerly acquired. Yet, though latent, that knowledge was still useful to me, for it developed my intelligence and gave me a taste for elevated things, which inspired me with repugnance for the

⁸⁶ That is to say, during the sleep of the body. Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*”; Book Second, chap. VIII. — TR.

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ignoble examples that I had under my eyes. But for that anterior education, *I should have been a mere lackey.*

Q. Servants sometimes manifest, for their masters, a devotion that rises even to abnegation; is such devotion always a result of relations established between the parties in anterior lives?

A. In almost all cases. Such servants have sometimes been members of the same family as their employers, or, like me, have a debt of gratitude to pay; and, in all cases, their devotion helps their own advancement. How little you suspect the intimate connection that so often exists between the sympathies and antipathies of your present life and the relationships of your anterior existences! No, death does not break off those relationships, for they are often carried on from century to century.

Q. Why is it that such instances of devotion on the part of servants are so rare at the present day?

A. Because the spirit of the age, in your world, is one of selfishness and pride, developed by unbelief and materialistic ideas. The faith in goodness is driven away by the greed of gain, and, with it, the capacity of devotedness. Spiritism, by bringing men back to a true belief, will rekindle the virtues that are now dying out.

No better example could be given of the benefits resulting from the forgetfulness of our anterior lives. If Mr. de G—— had remembered who his young servant had been, he would have found it very awkward, and would certainly not have allowed him to remain in that situation; he would thus have prevented him from undergoing a trial that was useful to both of them.

ANTONIO B — BURIED ALIVE — THE LAW OF RETALIATION

Mr. Antonio B——, a talented writer, highly esteemed by his fellow-townsmen, and who had occupied, with success and integrity, an official positioning in Lombardy, fell, about 1850, after an attack of apoplexy, into a state of apparent death that was unfortunately mistaken, as sometimes happens, for real death; a mistake all the more natural, in his case, because the body exhibited signs of decomposition. Fifteen days after this gentleman's burial, a fortuitous circumstance led his family to require the exhumation, in order to recover a locket that had been accidentally enclosed in the coffin; when, to the stupefaction of all who assisted at the operation, it was found that the position of the body had changed, that it had turned around, and, horrible to relate! That the defunct had partly eaten one of his hands. It was therefore evident that the unhappy man had been buried alive, and that he had succumbed to the double torture of suffocation and hunger.

Mr. Antonio B—— evoked by the Paris Society in August, 1861, at the request of one of his relatives, replied as follows: —

1. (*Evocation*) – A. What do you want with me?

2. **One of your relatives has asked us to evoke you; we have done so with pleasure, and shall be pleased if you kindly reply to our questions.**

A. I shall reply very willingly.

3. **Do you remember the circumstances of your death?**

A. Ah! Most certainly I remember them! Why awaken the memory of that chastisement?

4. **Is it true that you were buried alive by mistake?**

A. The mistake was a very natural one, for my apparent death presented all the appearances of real death; I was almost bloodless. No one was to blame for an event that had been decided on before I was born.

5. **If our questions are of a nature to cause you pain, shall we cease our inquiry?**

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A. No, go on.

6. We should be glad to know that you are happy; for you had the reputation of having been a good man.

A. Thank you, I know that you will pray for me. I will try to answer you; if I fail, one of your guides will reply for me.

7. Can you describe your sensations at the terrible moment?

A. Oh! What an agonizing trial! To feel yourself shut in between four planks, so that you can neither turn nor move! To be unable to call, the voice producing no sounds where there is no air. What a frightful torture is that of the wretch who seeks in vain to draw a breath in an atmosphere insufficient in quantity and deprived of its breathable elements! Alas! I seemed to be in an oven, only without the warmth. Oh! I could not wish such tortures on anyone; no, I wish nobody an end like mine! What a cruel punishment of a cruel and ferocious existence! Do not ask me what I thought about; I looked back into my past, and I had a vague glimmering of the future.

8. You say “a cruel punishment of a cruel and ferocious existence;” but your excellent reputation seems opposed to such a supposition. Can you explain to us what you refer to?

A. What is a single life in our eternal career? Certainly I tried to act aright in my last incarnation; but this death had been accepted by me before I came back into a human body. Why question me concerning that painful past, which is known only to myself and to the spirits who are the ministers of the Almighty? Know, if I must tell you, that in an anterior existence I had walled up a woman – my wife – alive, in a cellar! It is the action of the law of retaliation that I had brought upon myself; “A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye.”

9. We thank you for having had the kindness to reply to our questions, and we pray God to forgive you the past for the sake of your last incarnation.

A. I will come to you at some future time; for the present, the spirit of Erastes will kindly complete my statements.

COMMENTARY OF THE MEDIUM’S GUIDE

You learn from this confession that all your lives are connected, and that no one of them is independent of the others; the cares, troubles, and anxieties, just as much as the great sorrows, of human life, are the consequences of anterior existences that have been criminal or ill employed. Nevertheless, I may say that deaths such as that of Antonio B—— are rare; and if this man, whose last existence was blameless, came to his end in such a way, it was because he himself had demanded to undergo that death, in order to shorten his period of erraticity and to rise more rapidly towards the higher spheres. After passing through a time of trouble and of moral suffering, for the further expiation of his terrible crime, he will be forgiven and will be able to enter a higher world, in which he will meet his former victim, who is awaiting him there, and who has, long ago, forgiven him. Let this fearful example teach you, dear spiritist friend, to bear patiently the sufferings, both physical and moral, and all the petty tribulations, of your lives.

Q. Of what use to mankind are such terrible punishments?

A. Providential punishments are not intended to develop the human race, but to chastise the individual wrongdoer. Every punishment is exactly adapted to the special wrongdoing of which it is the result. Why are there madmen? Why are there idiots? Why are there paralytics? Why do some perish by fire? Why do others linger for years in the tortures of a living death, unable either to live or to die? Respect the Sovereign Will, in all cases, knowing that there is a reason for all its providential decrees, and that God is just and beneficent in all that He does.

ERASTES

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Is there not a great and solemn teaching in the fact of such a punishment of such a crime? Does it not show that the justice of God always overtakes the guilty, and that, although sometimes slow, it nonetheless follows its course? What could lend a weightier practical sanction to the moral law than the knowledge that, although great criminals sometimes end their life peacefully and even in the enjoyment of abundant earthly blessings, the hour of expiation will come, for them, as for all others? Punishments of this nature are comprehensible, not only because we see them, in some sort, under our eyes, but also because they are logical; they are believed, because they are admissible by our reason.

We see, moreover, that the honorability of a life does not exempt it from trials, because the latter have been chosen, accepted, or submitted to, by each human being, as a complement of expiation; every trial is an installment of a debt that has to be repaid in full before we can receive the reward of the progress we have achieved.

When we consider how frequent, in the past, even among the highest and most enlightened classes, were actions of a barbarity that appears to us so revolting at the present day – how many murders were committed in the times when men sported with the lives of their fellows, and when the strong crushed the weak without scruple – it is easy to see how many there must be, among the people of our day, who have to wash themselves clean of an evil past; and we cease to wonder at the number of victims of isolated casualties or great catastrophes. The despotism, fanaticism, ignorance, and prejudices of the Middle Ages, and those that succeed them, have bequeathed, to subsequent generations, an immense debt that is not yet paid off. Many a misfortune appears to us to be undeserved, simply because we see only the present, without seeing the close connection of the present with the past.

MR. LETIL

Mr. Letil, a manufacturer in the neighborhood of Paris, died in April 1864, under exceptionally horrible circumstances. A great cauldron of boiling varnish took fire and upset, the whole of its contents falling upon him, so that he was covered, instantaneously, with the burning matter and felt that his doom was sealed. There was no one with him in the workshop, at the time of the accident, but a young apprentice; yet he had the courage to return to his dwelling, distant some two hundred yards. When he reached the house, his flesh, completely roasted, fell from him in strips; the bones of his face and of part of his body were entirely denuded. He lingered for some twelve hours in the most horrible agony, retaining, nevertheless, the full possession of his faculties up to the last moment, and setting his affairs in order with perfect clearness of mind. Throughout this frightful suffering, he uttered no complaint, no murmur, and he died with a prayer on his lips. He was a man of most honorable character; gentle, benevolent, he was loved and esteemed by all who knew him. He had embraced the spiritist philosophy with enthusiasm, but without sufficient reflection; and consequently, being something of a medium, he was frequently the dupe of mocking spirits; which fact, however, by no means weakened his belief in the reality of spirit-manifestation, his confidence in the statements made to him by the invisibles being sometimes carried to the verge of credulity.

Evoked by the Paris Society, a few days after his death, and while still under the impression of the terrible accident of which he had been the victim, he made the following communication:

“A load of sadness still weighs upon me! Still overwhelmed with the horror of my tragic death, I seem to myself to be under the axe of the executioner. Oh, what suffering! What horrible suffering. I shudder at the thought of it. I seem still to be sickened with the fetid smell of my burning flesh. Death-agony of twelve dreadful hours – what a trial for the guilty spirit! But he suffered without complaining, and he is therefore about to receive his pardon.

“My beloved wife! Weep not for me; my pain will soon be over. I no longer suffer any real pain; but the remembrance of what I have gone through is as painful as the reality. My knowledge of

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Spiritism has been a great help to me; I now see that, had it not been for this consoling belief, I should have remained in the delirium into which I was thrown by my fearful death.

“But I have a comforter who has not quitted me since I drew my last breath; even before I had finished speaking, I saw him standing beside me. I fancied, at first, that my sufferings were rendering me delirious and showing me phantoms; but no, it was my Guardian Angel who, silent and motionless, consoled me with his unspoken sympathy. No sooner had I bid farewell to the Earth than he whispered: – ‘Come with me, my son, and open your eyes to the light!’ I breathed more freely; I seemed to be awakening from a hideous dream; I spoke of my beloved wife, of the courageous boy who had risked his own life helping me. ‘They are all upon the Earth,’ he replied, ‘you, my son! are now in the spirit-world!’ I looked about for my house; my Guardian Angel allowed me to go back into it, going in with me. I saw everyone in tears; all was sadness and mourning in the dwelling formerly so peaceful. I could not bear the painful sight; overcome by the sorrows of those I love, I said to my Guide, ‘O my good Angel! Let us go away!’ – ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘let us go hence and seek rest!’

“Since then, I suffer less; if I did not see my wife inconsolable, my friends so sad, I should almost be happy.

“My kind, good Guardian Angel had given me permission to tell you the cause of my having to undergo so painful a death; for your instruction, my friends, I make the avowal of the horrible crime which I have thus expiated.

“Two hundred years ago, I caused a young maiden, innocent as is a child of her age (for she was only about twelve years old), to be burned at the stake. Of what was she accused? Alas! of having taken part in a conspiracy against the power of the priesthood. I was an Italian, a Judge of the Inquisition; the executioners dared not touch the youthful victim; I, myself, was both her Judge and her executioner. O Justice of God; how perfect art Thou! I have submitted to Thy sentence; I had resolved so firmly not to waver in the day of my trial that I was able to keep my promise; I did not murmur, and Thou, O my God! hast forgiven me! But when will the remembrance of my poor, innocent victim be effaced from my memory? It is *that* which makes me suffer! I must have *her* forgiveness also.

“Children of the new doctrine! You sometimes say: – ‘We do not remember what we did in our former lives, and we are therefore unable to avoid the evils to which we are exposed by our forgetfulness of the past.’ O my brothers! Bless God for this forgetfulness! If He had left you the memory of your past, you would have no respite upon the Earth. Incessantly pursued by remorse and shame, could you have a moment’s peace in all your life?”

“The forgetfulness of the past is a blessing; here, we remember, and this remembrance is torture. In a little while, and as a reward for the patience with which I bore my expiation, God will grant me the forgetfulness of my crime. This has just been promised me by my Guardian Angel.”

Mr. Letil’s character, in his last existence, shows how much his spirit had improved. His excellent conduct was the result of his repentance and of the good resolutions he had formed in errancy; but it did not suffice to wipe out his past. For that, it was necessary to seal his good resolutions by a great trial, by enduring, as a man, what he had made other men endure; to be resigned, under such terrible circumstances, was the most arduous task that could be imposed upon a human being; but, happily for him, he did not fail under the trial. His knowledge of Spiritism did much to sustain his courage, through the assured belief in the future which he owed to it; he knew that the sorrows of life are trials and expiations, and he therefore submitted to his fate without a murmur, saying to himself: “*God is just; therefore I must have deserved this suffering!*”

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AN AMBITIOUS SCIENTIST

Madame B——, a lady of Bordeaux, in easy circumstances, was a martyr, from one end of her life to the other, to the physical sufferings resulting from a constant succession of serious illnesses by which she was attacked, from the age of five months, through a period of seventy years, and which kept her always on the verge of the grave. Three times was she poisoned by the experiments tried upon her by medical science, still so uncertain; and her constitution, ruined by drugs as much as by disease, left her, at length, a prey to intolerable sufferings that nothing could alleviate. Her daughter, a spiritist and a medium, besought of God, in her prayers, to lessen her mother's distressing trials; but her spirit-guide, having advised her to pray only that she might be strengthened to bear them with patience and resignation, dictated the following explanation of the state to which she was reduced:

"In every human existence is *an effect; there is no suffering in your present life that is not the echo of sufferings which you have caused to others in the past*; every privation you endure is the counterpoise of an excess of which you have been guilty in a former life; every tear you shed is needed to wash away some fault or some crime. Each must therefore bear, with patience and resignation, his sufferings of body or of mind, however severe they may seem to him; remembering the husbandman, who continues his labors, notwithstanding fatigue, sustained by the thought of the ripened grain that will be the reward of his perseverance. Let it be thus with all who suffer in your Earth, and the aspiration after the happiness which is the harvest of patience will give them strength to bear the passing sorrows of human life.

"It is thus with your mother; every pain accepted by her as an expiation effaces a blemish in her past; and the sooner those blemishes are effaced, the sooner will she be happy. *The lack of resignation renders suffering sterile*, because, in such a case, your trials have to be undergone anew. What she most needs, therefore, is resolution and submission; and what you should ask for her is, that God and her spirit friends may aid her to be brave and patient.

"Your mother was formerly a distinguished physician, who had a large practice among the class which spares no outlay for its comfort or convenience, and he was laden with wealth and honors. Ambitious of renown and of riches, bent on acquiring all that was known to science of his day – not from a desire to alleviate the sufferings of his brethren, for he was no philanthropist, but as a means of increasing his reputation and, consequently, his practice, – he stuck at nothing that could advance his knowledge of disease. The mother was martyred on her couch of suffering, that he might study the convulsions he determined; the infant was subjected to experiments intended to furnish him with the key to certain phenomena; the death of the aged was pitilessly hastened; the strong man was sacrificed that he might ascertain the action of some given drug; and all these experiments were tried on unfortunate patients who submitted to his treatment confiding in his skill. The gratification of greed and pride, the thirst of gold and of fame, such were the mainsprings of his action. It has taken a succession of ages and of terrible trials to conquer this proud and ambitious spirit; but, at last, repentance has begun to exercise its curative influence, and the work of reparation is making progress, for the trials of his present life are nothing in comparison with those he had previously endured. Take comfort, therefore, in the thought that, although the punishment of the spirit, now incarnated as your mother, has been long and severe, the reward of her present patience, resignation, and humility will be great.

"Take courage, all you who suffer! Think how short is the duration of even the longest human life; think of the eternity of happiness to which the brief sorrows of time are leading you; call to your aid *Hope*, that devoted friend of suffering hearts, and *Faith*, her sister, who points to the Heavens to which Hope introduces you beforehand! Call also to your aid the noble spirit-helpers given to you by Providence, who are always around you, who love you, who sustain you, and whose constant solicitude is directed to the task of bringing you back to Him from whom you have estranged yourselves by transgressing His laws."

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After her death, Mme. B—— gave, through her daughter, and through other mediums, various communications reflecting high excellence of mind and heart, and fully confirming all that had been stated to her daughter respecting her previous existences.

CHARLES DE SAINT-G——
(*Spiritist Society of Paris, 1860*)

Charles de Saint-G—— was a mentally disabled thirteen year old child. His intellectual nullity was such that he did not even know his parents and could hardly take his food. In his case, the development of the bodily organism seemed to have been entirely arrested.

1. (To Saint Louis.) – Q. Will you have the kindness to tell us whether we can evoke the spirit of the idiot-boy of whom we are thinking?

A. You can evoke him as though you were evoking the spirit of one deceased.

2. Your answer would lead us to suppose that we could evoke him at any moment?

A. Yes; his soul is held to his body by physical links, but not by spiritual links; it can therefore disengage itself from the body at any time.

3. (Evocation of Charles de Saint-G——.) – A. I am an unhappy spirit bound to the Earth, like a bird tied by the leg.

4. In your present place, are you, as a spirit, conscious of your nullity as a human being?

A. Certainly, I clearly feel my captivity.

5. While your body is asleep and your spirit is disengaged from it, are your thoughts as lucid as though you were in a normal state?

A. When my wretched body is asleep, I am somewhat freer to raise my thought towards the Heaven to which I aspire.

6. Does your physical state cause you, as a spirit, any painful feeling?

A. Yes, for it is a punishment.

7. Do you remember your preceding existence?

A. Oh yes, it is the cause of my present exile.

8. What were you in that existence?

A. A young libertine, in the reign of Henri III.

9. You say that your present condition is a punishment; it was then, chosen by you?

A. No.

10. How can your present existence be useful to your advancement in the state of nullity in which you are?

A. My state is not a nullity in the sight of God who imposed it upon me.

11. Do you foresee the end of your present life?

A. No; I only know that sooner or later, I shall return to my native country.

12. What were you doing as a spirit, between your previous incarnation and your present life?

A. It was on account of my frivolity, as a spirit, that I was sentenced by God to my present imprisonment.

13. In your daily life, are you aware of what goes on around you, notwithstanding the imperfection of your organs?

A. I see, I hear; but my body neither understands nor sees anything.

14. Can we do anything that would be of use to you?

A. Nothing.

(To Saint Louis) – Q. Are prayers of the same use to a reincarnated spirit as to a discarnate one?

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A. Prayers are always agreeable to God; they could not be of any immediate use to this unhappy spirit in his present state; but they will be taken note of and will be useful to him by and by.

This evocation confirms the statements so often made by our spirit-friends about mentally disabled people. Their mental nullity does not result from any nullity of their spirit, who, apart from his bodily organs, is in possession of all his faculties. A defective organization is only an obstacle to the free manifestation of those faculties; it does not annihilate them. A mentally disabled person is like a strong man bound.

DISSERTATION ON MENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE DICTATED BY A SPIRIT, AT A MEETING OF THE PARIS SOCIETY

Mentally disabled people are spirits, who are being punished, upon the Earth, for their misuse of splendid faculties, by the imprisonment of their soul in a body whose organs are unable to express their thoughts. This mental and physical *dumbness* is one of the severest of terrestrial chastisements; nevertheless, it is often chosen by repentant spirits who desire to pay, *quickly*, the debt of their past. This trial is not useless to the spirit thus incarnated, for he does not remain stationary in his fleshly prison; the vacant eyes see, the depressed brain conceives, although the mentally disabled is unable to express himself either by word or by look. Except that he has the faculty of motion, he is in the state of the cataleptic that sees and hears what is taking place around him, without being able to express himself in regard to it.

When, in nightmare, you try to flee from danger and to cry out for help, while your tongue cleaves to your palate and your feet are riveted to the ground, you feel, for a moment, what the mentally disabled feels always; *a paralysis of the body weighing upon the life of the soul*.

All infirmities are consequences of moral delinquencies; nothing occurs without a cause; and what you call “the injustice of fate” is the application of the highest justice. Madness, also, is a punishment of the abuse of eminent faculties in a prior life. The madman has two personalities; one that commits all manners of extravagances, and another that is conscious of his action but without the power to direct it. As for the mentally disabled, the isolated and contemplative existence of their soul, though severed from the interests of ordinary life, may be as agitated as the existences that are most fertile in external events; some of them rebel against the torture they have chosen, regret having chosen it, and feel a furious desire to return to another life; a desire which causes them to forget both the resignation with which they should bear their present trial and the remorse they should feel for their past, of which they are conscious; for the mentally disabled know more than you do, and possess, hidden under their physical incapacity, a mental power of which you have no idea. The acts of fury or imbecility to which they are impelled by their body are condemned by their inner being, which is pained and mortified by them. Consequently, to mock at them, to insult them, to maltreat them, as is so often done, increases their suffering, for it makes them feel more bitterly their weakness and abjectness; and, if they could, they would hurl the charge of cowardice against those who only treat them thus because they know them to be unable to defend themselves.

Mental disability is not one of the laws of God, and science will succeed in getting rid of them; for they are the result of ignorance, poverty, and dirt. The progress and generalization of physiological science and the improvement of hygienic conditions will gradually extirpate them. Progress being the inevitable destiny of mankind, the trials imposed on the human race will be modified and will follow the ascensional movement of coming ages, becoming, in time, altogether mental and moral; and, when your Earth – still in its early youth – shall have accomplished the initial phases of its career, it will

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cease to be a place of expiation, and will become a sojourn of felicity, like the planets that have reached a more advanced stage of development.

PIERRE J—— (*The Medium's Father*)

There was a time when men doubted whether the mentally disabled had a soul and whether they belonged to the human race. Is not the spiritist explanation of their state at once eminently moral and instructive? Is there not matter for serious reflection in the thought that these degraded bodies contain souls which have formerly played a brilliant part in the world, which are as lucid and as active as our own, beneath the thick envelope that stifles the manifestation of their faculties, and that the same doom may overtake ourselves, if we make an evil use of the faculties we now possess?

How, on any other hypothesis than that of the plurality of existences, can mental disability be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God? If the soul has not already lived, it must have been created at the same time as the body; but how, in that case, can we justify the creation of souls so cruelly frustrated of their birthright, as are those of the mentally disabled, by a just and benevolent God? For we are not now discussing the results of accident or of illness, such as attacks of insanity, that may be prevented or cured; the beings we are considering are born, and die, in the same state. If they are what they appear to be, having no notion of good or evil, what will be their fate throughout eternity? If they are to be as happy as men of intelligence and who have been laborious and useful, why should they be thus favored with the gift of happiness that they have done nothing to deserve? If they are to be in what theologians call "Limbo" – a mixed state that is neither happiness nor misery – why are they condemned to that eternal inferiority? Is it their fault if God has created them mentally disabled? We defy those who reject the doctrine of reincarnation to escape from this dilemma. With the admission of reincarnation, on the contrary, what seemed to be an injustice is seen to be admirably just, what is otherwise inexplicable is explained in the most simple and rational manner.

But we have never known the opponents of this doctrine to bring against it any other argument than their personal reluctance to come back to the Earth; to which objection we reply that God no more asks our permission for the execution of His laws, than an earthly judge consults the good pleasure of the criminal whom he sends to prison. Each of us would prefer, no doubt, to enter at once into a higher sphere, on quitting this life; but, as nothing evil is admitted into those happier spheres, it is evident that we must have completely cured ourselves of our defects before we can enter them.

It is to be remarked that, in some countries, the mentally disabled, far from being objects of contempt, are treated with the utmost kindness. Is this kindness due to an intuitive sense of the true state of these hapless creatures, as being all the more worthy of pity because their spirit, understanding his position, necessarily suffers excruciatingly at seeing himself regarded as the off scouring of the human race?

However this may be, there are regions in which people consider as a favor, as a benediction from above, the presence of a mentally disabled person in the family. Is this a result of superstition? It may be so, because, among the ignorant, there is often an unconscious mixture of superstition with their best and healthiest ideas. At all events, the presence of a mentally disabled child is always an occasion for the exercise of a charity that is all the more meritorious, because mental disability occurs mostly among the poor, and such a child is a charge for which they have no compensation. There is evidently more generosity in bestowing care and affection on an ill-favored, helpless, and useless child, than on one whose beauty, liveliness, and good qualities repay the care of its parents; and generosity, being one of the virtues most pleasing in the sight of God, necessarily attracts His blessing on those who practice it. The innate sentiment of those who thus cherish a mentally disabled child is the unconscious application of this thought: – "We thank Thee, O God! for having given us, as a test of our charity, a helpless and afflicted creature to sustain and to console!"

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ADELAIDE-MARGARET GOSSE

She was a poor servant-girl, of very humble birth, in Normandy, near Honfleur. At the age of eleven, she entered the service of a wealthy grazier of her village. A few years afterwards, an inundation of the Seine carried off, and drowned, all her master's cattle; other misfortunes supervened, and the family were completely ruined. Margaret linked her fate to theirs; and, listening only to the dictates of her generous heart, she insisted on their accepting the whole of her little savings (\$ 30), continued to serve them without wages, and, at their death, attached herself in the same way to their daughter, a widow, infirm, and entirely without means. She worked in the fields and brought home her gains to the widow. She married, and, her husband's wages being added to her own, she still supported and served the unfortunate lady, whom she always called "her mistress." She kept up this sublime sacrifice for nearly half a century.

The "Emulation Society" of Rouen, desirous of testifying its respect and admiration for this excellent woman, voted her a Medal of Honor and a gift in money; the Masonic Lodge of Havre took part in this testimony of esteem and also offered her a small sum; and, lastly, the local authorities of her village, wishing to spare her the necessity of earning her own bread in her old age, made, with kindness and delicacy, a provision for her simple wants.

A brain stroke carried off, instantaneously and painlessly, this woman, whose whole life had been passed in doing good. The cost of her funeral, simple, but decent, was defrayed by her village, the local official taking the lead in the procession.

Evoked by the Paris Society, on December 27th, 1861, she replied as follows:

A. I am happy to be allowed to come to you.

Q. We have wished to testify to you our admiration of the devotedness of your terrestrial existence, and we hope that your generous abnegation has had its reward.

A. Yes, God has rewarded His servant far beyond her merits. What I did, and that you think praiseworthy, was very natural.

Q. Can you tell us why you were placed in so humble a sphere upon the Earth?

A. I had occupied, in two successive existences, a high position, in which it was easy for me to do good; I gave, without self-sacrifice, because I was rich; but I found that, under these circumstances, I was advancing too slowly. I therefore demanded to come back in a humbler position, in which I should have to struggle, in my own person, with want and privation; and I prepared myself carefully, and through long effort, to bear this new trial. Through the spirit-help vouchsafed to me from God, I was enabled to attain the end I had in view.

Q. Have you met again with your old master and his family? And if so, please tell us what is your position in regard to them, and whether you still consider yourself as being their inferior?

A. I have met them again; they were awaiting me, on my arrival in the spirit-world. I must add, in all humility, that they consider me as being very far above them.

Q. Had you any special motive for attaching yourself to them, rather than to any others?

A. I was under no obligation to do so, for I could have attained my aim as well with any others; but I chose them, in order to pay off a debt of gratitude. They had been kind to me, and had done me a service, in a former life.

Q. What do you foresee in regard to your future?

A. I hope to be reincarnated in a world in which sorrow is unknown. Perhaps you may think this presumptuous on my part; but I leave the matter entirely to the Divine decision.

Q. We thank you for coming at our call, and we have no doubt that God will shower blessings upon you.

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A. Thanks. May God's blessing be with you, also; and may it be given to you all to share, on returning to the spirit-world, the unmixed felicity that I am now enjoying!

CLARA RIVIER

Clara Rivier was a young girl who died at the age of ten. She belonged to a family of day laborers, in a village in the south of France; from the time she was four years old she had been entirely deprived of the use of her limbs. Throughout her life, she never uttered a complaint, never showed the least impatience; although totally uneducated, she consoled her sorrowing family by talking to them of the future life and of the happiness she would enjoy in it. She died in September 1862, after four years of tortures and convulsions, during which she prayed incessantly. "I am not afraid to die," she frequently repeated, "because a life of happiness is awaiting me afterwards." To her father, who was weeping, she said: "Be comforted; I shall come to visit you; my hour is near, I feel it; but, when it comes, I shall know it and will warn you of it, beforehand." Just before she died, she called all her family to her bedside, saying: "I have but five minutes to live; give me your hands." They did so; and she died at the moment she had indicated.

After her death, a rapping spirit frequently disturbed her parents' house, upsetting everything, striking heavy blows on the tables, shaking curtains and clothes, displacing cups and platters. The spirit of Clara herself appeared to her younger sister (five years old), who asserted that she frequently came and talked with her, and who often exclaimed, joyfully, "Oh, look at Clara! How pretty she is!"

1. **(Evocation of Clara Rivier.)** – A. I am beside you, ready to reply to your questions.

2. **Whence did you derive, young and uneducated, as you were, the elevated ideas you expressed, in regard to the future life, before your death?**

A. From the shortness of the time I had to pass on your globe, and from my preceding incarnation. I had been a medium during that previous life; and I was a medium when I came back among you. My last life was the result of predestination; I *felt* and I *saw* all that I stated.

3. **How could a child of your age refrain from uttering a single complaint through four years of constant pain?**

A. My physical suffering was controlled by a still greater power – that of my Guardian Angel, whom I beheld constantly beside me; he reduced the pains I felt, and he rendered my will superior to my suffering.

4. **How did you foresee the moment of your death?**

A. My Guardian Angel had told me when it would take place; he was never mistaken.

5. **You said to your father: "Be comforted; I shall come to visit you." Why, having felt so affectionately towards your parents, do you now torment them, by making such a racket in their house?**

A. They have to undergo this trial, which it is my mission to direct. Do you suppose there is no end to be gained by these disturbances? The noises, movements, and confusion determined by my presence, are a warning to the entire neighborhood. I am assisted in this work by spirits whose turbulence is employed in view of an aim to be attained, as I also have an aim in appearing to my sister. Thanks to these visitations, many will be convinced of the reality of another life. My parents had to undergo a trial; it will soon be ended, but only after having brought conviction to many minds.

6. **It is not you, then, in your own person, who produce these manifestations?**

A. I am seconded by other spirits, who serve as the agents of the trial appointed to my dear parents.

7. **How could your sister have seen you, if it is not you who produce these manifestations?**

A. My sister saw only me. It is not the last time I shall come to console and encourage her.

8. **Why were you, being so young, afflicted with so many infirmities?**

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A. I had to expiate the faults of a former life; I had misused health and a brilliant position in my preceding incarnation. God, therefore, said to me: “You have enjoyed immensely, without stint or measure; you shall suffer on the same scale. You have been proud, you shall be humble; you have been vain of your beauty, you shall be as a broken reed; instead of seeking your own selfish satisfaction, you shall seek to acquire charity and kindness.” I did what was appointed me by the Divine will; and my Guardian Angel aided me.

9. Would you like to say anything to your parents?

A. By the advice of a medium, my parents have done many charitable acts; this is well, for men must pray, not with the lips only, but also with the heart and the hand. To give to those who suffer is the true prayer for Spiritists.

God has given to every soul *freewill*, that is to say, *the faculty of progressing*; to all, He has given the same aspiration, for which reason *the humble garment of serge is nearer to the robe of cloth-of-gold than is generally supposed*. Apply yourselves, then, to drawing your social classes nearer to each other by the exercise of charity; bring the poor to your houses, encourage them, raise them, do not humiliate them. If this great law of Conscience were practiced by the people of your Earth, you would not have to undergo, from time to time, the great cataclysms that are a disgrace to nations calling themselves “civilized,” and that are sent by God to punish them for their blindness and to make them open their eyes.

My dear Parents! Pray, love, practice the love of Christ. Do, to others, only what you would have them do to you; when God sends you a trial, implore His aid in bearing it, as being imposed by His high and holy will. Arm yourselves, as a preparation for the future, with courage and perseverance, for you have still to suffer; and remember that you must earn admission to a happier world before you can enter it. I shall always be with you dear parents. Good bye, or better yet, until later. Cultivate resignation, charity, the love of the neighbor, and you will thus arrive at the abode of felicity.

CLARA

“The humble garment of serge is nearer to the robe of cloth-of-gold than is generally supposed” is a charming metaphor referring to the fact that spirits pass, in their successive existences, from a brilliant position to one that is obscure and poverty-stricken, or *vice versa*, according as they have misused the one, or made, through patience and resignation, a good use of the other. The justice of this providential arrangement is too obvious to call for comment.

Another thought, equally profound, expressed in the foregoing communication, is that which attributes the calamities of nations to their infractions of the law of God, for God punishes nations as He punishes individuals. It is certain that, if nations practiced the law of charity, there would be neither wars nor any other great troubles. The aim of Spiritism is to lead men to the practice of this law; is that the reason why it encounters such violent opposition? Are the words, addressed by the spirit of this young girl to her parents, those of a demon?”

FRANCES VERNHES

She was a daughter of a farmer in the neighborhood of Toulouse, blind from her birth, she died in 1855, at the age of forty-five. Her great pleasure was to teach the Catechism. When the Catechism was modified, she had no problem to teach the new one, as she knew both by heart. One dark winter’s night, when she was returning from a peregrination of several leagues in company with her aunt – the two women having to pass through a forest by paths that were in a frightful state, full of mud, and cut up with dangerous holes and ditches, demanding great precaution to avoid falling in – her aunt wished to lead her by the hand, but she refused, saying: “Do not be uneasy about me; I am in no danger of

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falling, for I see, just before me, a light that shows me the way. Follow me; it is I who will lead you.” They reached home, thus, without accident, the blind woman leading the one who had her eyesight. She was evoked, in Paris, in 1865.

Q. Will you kindly tell us what was the light that guided you on that dark night, and that was only visible for you?

A. Is it possible that persons, who, like yourselves, are in constant communication with spirits, can need an explication of such a fact? It was my Guardian Angel who guided me.

Q. We suppose that such was the case, but we wished to have your confirmation of our supposition. Were you conscious, at the time that it was your Guardian Angel who was acting as your guide?

A. No, and yet I believed it was a celestial protection. I had so often prayed God to take pity on me! It is so dreadful to be blind! Yes, it is very dreadful; but I admit that it is perfectly just. Those who sin with the eyes must be punished through the eyes; and so with all the faculties of which men make a bad use. Do not imagine that there is any other cause, for the numerous ills that afflict the human race, than the true one, viz., *expiation*; expiation which is of no avail unless submitted to with resignation, but which may be rendered less painful, if, by prayer, you attract the spiritual influences that protect the inmates of *the human penitentiary*, and pour hope and consolation into the hearts of the afflicted.

Q. You had devoted yourself to teaching the Catechism to the children of the poor; had you any trouble in acquiring the necessary knowledge for the teaching of the Catechism, which you knew by heart, in spite of your poor sight and the modification it had received?

A. The other senses of the blind are, in general, doubly acute. The observation is not about the least important faculty of their nature. Their memory is like a file cabinet in which are deposited, in an orderly manner and forever, the teaching according to the tendencies and inclinations. Since nothing from the outside has the possibility of perturbing that faculty, results therefore, in its being able to develop in a notable fashion through education.

But such was not my case, for I was totally uneducated. I had learned the Catechism by heart, and I understood it sufficiently to be able to fulfill the mission of devotedness to children which I had accepted, and thus to make reparation for the bad example I had set them in my former existence. Everything may furnish serious study for Spiritists; for this, they have only to look around them, seeking an explanation of the facts of life in their luminous doctrine, which will be much more useful to them than troubling themselves with the pretended philosophies of certain spirits who amuse themselves at the expense of their mediums, putting forth a mass of pompous absurdities that only flatter their vanity, and that explain none of the problems of human life.

Q. We infer, from your language, that you are as advanced, intellectually, as your conduct on Earth showed you to be morally.

A. I have still much to acquire; but there are many, upon the Earth, which pass for being ignorant, because their intelligence is veiled by expiation; at death, that veil falls away, and those who passed for ignoramus are then seen to be farther advanced in knowledge than those who despised them. Believe-me, pride is the touchstone that decides the quality of men. Those whose heart is accessible to flatteries, which are too confident of their own knowledge, are on the wrong road; they are not sincerely devoted to the search after truth. (Remember the words of Christ: “*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*”) Be humble like the Christ, and like Him, carry your cross with love in order to gain access to the Kingdom of Heaven

FRANCES VERNHES

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ANNA BITTER

To lose a beloved child is always a keen and grievous sorrow; but to see an *only* child – gifted with the finest and most promising qualities and the *sole* object of one's affection – pining away, without pain, from no ascertainable cause; to have exhausted all the resources of the medical art, only to acquire the certainty that the strange wasting away of this idolized child must necessarily have a fatal issue; and to endure this anguish every day for many years, without the possibility of hope, - it is a terrible torture, and one that must necessarily be rendered all the more painful by the possession of wealth, from which the object of an idolizing, but torturing, affection can derive neither profit nor pleasure.

Such was the situation of Anna Bitter's father. A gloomy despair took possession of his mind, and his temper became everyday more irritable from the contemplation of the distressing spectacle which could only terminate fatally, though after a lapse of time it was impossible to calculate beforehand.

A friend of the family, a spiritist, questioned his spirit-guide on the subject of this affliction and received the following reply:

"I will gladly explain the strange phenomenon that you have before your eyes, as I know that your request is not prompted by an indiscreet curiosity, but rather due to your interest in this poor little girl, and because, in lieu of your belief in divine justice, it will be a valuable teaching for you. Those who are smitten by the Divine Hand should bow to the infliction instead of rebelling against it; for no one is ever smitten without cause. The poor child, the execution of whose death-warrant has been delayed a while by the Almighty, will soon return to us, which will be a great blessing for her; and her unhappy father will have to bear the punishment he had brought upon himself, being smitten in the sole affection of his life, for having trifled with the affection and confidence of those around him. His repentance has reached the Almighty, for a moment, and death has suspended the thrust of the sword over that dear head; however, he has returned to the revolt and we all know that the punishment always follows. Pray for this poor child, whose youth will render the operation of disengagement more difficult; There is such an abundance of the sap of youth in this poor soul, that in spite of the weakness, that she is feeling, her spirit will find it difficult to detach itself. Oh! pray for her, and she will aid and console you in return, for her spirit is more advanced than are those among whom she is incarnated. It is through a special permission that I am enabled to reply to your inquiry, in order that your prayers may assist her in freeing herself from her body."

The father died after having undergone the pain of the emptiness and isolation caused by his daughter's death. We subjoin the first communication received from them both.

Anna B. Thanks, my friend, for the interest you took in the poor child who was so soon to vanish from the Earth, and for your prayers, which enabled me to escape more rapidly from my earthly envelope. My father, alas! did not pray for me; he cursed the decree that called me away. I cannot be angry with him for this; it was the result of his intense affection for me. I pray to God to grant him enlightenment before he dies; I try to excite his hope; my mission is to soften the pain of his last moments upon the Earth. At times, a ray of divine light seems to enter his mind; but it is only a passing flash, and he falls speedily back into his rebellious gloom. There is in him, as yet, only a germ of faith; and this germ is stifled under worldly interests, which must be cleared away by yet more painful trials, before it can grow and fructify. As for me, I had only a small complement of expiation still to undergo; my short life was therefore neither very painful nor very hard to bear. My strange illness caused me no suffering; I was rather an instrument of suffering for my father, who suffered much more at seeing me in such a state than I did myself; besides, I was resigned, but he was not. I am rewarded for this resignation by the happiness I now enjoy in the midst of the wise and loving spirits among whom I am, and whose occupations I am rejoiced to share, for inactivity would be a torture for the denizens of the spirit-world.

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(The father; a month after his death):

Q. Our objective in evoking you is due to our interest in your situation in the spiritual world, in order to be useful to you, if that is possible.

A. You ask me, “What is my position in the world of spirits?” The world of spirits! I see no spirits. I only see men whom I formerly knew, none of whom think of me or regret my absence; on the contrary, they seem glad to be rid of me.

Q. Are you aware of your situation?

A. Perfectly. For some time, I thought I was still in your world; but, now, I am quite aware that I have quitted it.

Q. How is it, then, that you do not see any spirits around you?

A. I don’t know; for it is quite light were I am.

Q. Have you seen your daughter?

A. No, she is dead; I seek her, I call her, but in vain. In what horrible void her death plunged me upon the Earth! In dying, I said to myself that I should, no doubt, find her again; but I see nothing of her. I am always in utter solitude; there is no one to speak to me a word of consolation or hope. Adieu. I am going to look for my child.

The Medium’s Guide. This man was neither an atheist nor a materialist; he was one of those who believe, vaguely, in God and in a future life, but without troubling themselves concerning either, being entirely absorbed by earthly things. Utterly selfish, though he would have sacrificed all he possessed for his child, he constantly sacrificed, without scruple, the interests of all around him to his own profit. With the exception of his daughter, there was no one for whom he had a particle of kindness. God has punished him for this selfishness, as you know; He took from him the object of his sole affection upon the Earth, and, as he has not repented of his selfishness, he is deprived of the sight of her in the spirit-world. He took no interest in any one else upon the Earth; here, no one takes any interest in him; he is alone, abandoned by all; such is his punishment. His daughter is near him, but he does not see her; if he did, he would not be punished. What does he do? Does he apply to God for help? Does he repent? No, he still murmurs and blasphemes; he does, in fact, just what he did upon the Earth. Aid him, by your prayers and your advice, to emerge from this blindness.

JOSEPH MAÎTRE

Joseph Maître possessed a small income that lifted him out of reach of want. His parents had given him a good education with a view to placing him in some manufacturing concern; but, in his twentieth year, he became blind. Twenty years afterwards, and ten years before his death – for he lived to the age of fifty – a second infirmity overtook him, for he became completely deaf, so that he could only communicate with the world around him through the sense of touch. No longer to see was, in itself, very painful; but no longer to be able to hear was, indeed, a terrible suffering for one who, having had the full use of his faculties, would naturally feel, all the more keenly, the pain of this double privation. How could he have incurred so sad a fate? Nothing in his last existence could have brought it upon him, for his conduct had always been exemplary; he was a good son, he was sweet-tempered and benevolent by nature, and when, after having been so long reduced to blindness, he found himself also deprived of hearing, he accepted that new trial with resignation, and was never heard to murmur or complain. His words always denoted perfect clearness of mind and a degree of intelligence above the average.

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One who had known him, thinking that an explanation of his fate could hardly fail to convey a useful lesson, evoked him after his death, and received the following communication:

(Paris, 1863)

“I thank you, my Friends, for having remembered me; and I come to you with pleasure, happy to be able to increase your knowledge of the connection which exists between successive lives, and to add my example to the proofs of the justice of God, which have already been furnished by so many other spirits.

“You knew me blind and deaf; and you have wondered what I had done to deserve such a fate; I will tell you. You must know, to begin with, that it was the second time I had been deprived of sight. In my preceding existence, which took place at the beginning of the last century, I became blind in consequence of excesses of every kind that had ruined my health and weakened my organs. This was a commencement of punishment for having misused the gifts I had received from Providence, for I was richly endowed; but, instead of confessing that I had been the cause of my infirmity, I accused Providence of injustice, though I only half believed in its existence. I raved against God, I disowned Him, I accused Him, exclaiming that, if He really existed, He must be unjust and wicked, since He allowed His creatures to suffer. I ought rather to have been thankful that I was not obliged, like so many of the blind, to beg my bread! But, instead of that, I thought only of myself and of the pleasures of which I was thus deprived. Under the action of these ideas and with my lack of faith, I became harsh, irritable, exacting, and unbearable for all about me. Life had now no aim for me; I thought nothing of the future, which I looked upon as a chimera. Having exhausted all the resources of science, and finding that a cure was impossible, I determined to cut short my misery, and I killed myself.

“On awakening in the other life, I found myself plunged, alas! in the same darkness as upon the Earth. I was not long in learning that I had quitted the world of men, but, though in the spirit-life, I was still blind. The life beyond the grave was, then, a reality! In vain did I try to rid myself of it, and to take refuge in annihilation! I could find no means of self-destruction; all my efforts struck against vacancy. If this other life was to be eternal, as I had heard it said, I should have, then, to remain forever in this situation? The thought was frightful. I suffered no physical pain; but to tell you the torments and the anguish of my mind would be impossible! How long did this agony last? I know not; but how fearfully long it seemed to me!

“Exhausted, harassed, worn out, a change at length came over my mind. I felt that I was weighed upon by some power superior to my own; I said to myself that, since this power could hold me down, it could also raise me up, and I implore its pity. As I prayed, and as the fervor of my appeal increased, something seemed to tell me that my dreadful position would come to an end. Light was at length restored to me; and great, indeed, was my delight when I began to see the celestial splendors and to distinguish the spirits who surrounded me smiling kindly, and those who were floating, radiant, through space. I would have followed them, but I was held back by an invisible force. One of the spirits near me then addressed me, saying: “God, whom you had forgotten, has taken note of your return to Him and has permitted us to restore your sight; but you have yielded only to constraint and to lassitude. If you would share in the happiness which we here enjoy, you must prove the sincerity of your repentance and of your good feelings, by commencing again your earthly trial, *under conditions which will expose you to the danger of again falling into the same faults*; for this new trial will be still harder to bear than the last.” I accepted eagerly, fully determined not to fail again.

“I therefore came back to Earth, in the incarnation which you know of. It was not difficult for me to be good, for I was not naturally bad. I had rebelled against God, and God had punished me; but I had come back, this time, with an innate faith in Him; and I therefore did not again murmur against Him, but bore my double infirmity with resignation, as an expiation that must have had its source in

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the Sovereign Justice. The isolation in which I found myself during the last years of my life failed to throw me into despair, because I believed in the future and in the mercy of God; on the contrary, it was highly beneficial to me, for, during that long night of silence, my soul, freed from the preoccupations of Earth, sprang forth towards the Eternal and obtained a fore glimpse of infinity. When my exile came to an end, the spirit-world offered me only splendors unspeakable and ineffable joys.

“In comparison with my past, my present situation seems to me to be one of unmixed felicity; but, when I look ahead, I see how far I still am from perfect happiness. I have expiated; *but I have still to make reparation. My last existence was only profitable to myself*; I hope soon to begin a new one in which I shall be useful to others and thus make up for my former uselessness. Then, and only then, shall I advance on the road to the perfect blessedness that awaits each spirit as the reward of his own persistent effort.

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ALLAN KARDEC'S BIOGRAPHY

Born in Lyon, France, on October 3, 1804, of a traditional family, greatly distinguished in the legal profession and court system, Allan Kardec (Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail) did not pursue these careers. From his youth, he was inclined toward the studies of science and of philosophy.

Educated in the renowned School of Pestalozzi, in Yverdon (Switzerland), he became one of that celebrated teacher's most eminent pupils and one of the most zealous propagandists of the Educational system that exercised a great influence in the reform of the Educational system in France and in Germany.

Endowed with a notable intelligence, he was drawn to teaching, due to his character and his special aptitudes. Being thoroughly knowledgeable in the German language, he translated into German a variety of works on education and on morals and, what is uniquely characteristic of him, the works of Fénelon that had seduced him in an intriguing way.

From 1835 to 1840, he established, in his home, in Paris, free study courses on Chemistry, Physics, Anatomy, Astronomy, etc., an accomplishment worthy of commendation at any time, but, above all, at this time in which only a few illuminated minds dared to follow that path. It can be seen that even before Spiritism had become popularized Allan Kardec through his Celtic pseudonym, had already become well known, through the varied nature of his accomplishments in the educational system. About the year 1855, the spotlight focused on the subject of the manifestations of the Spirits, and Allan Kardec became dedicated to persevering on the observations of that phenomenon, and cogitating mainly in deducing its philosophical consequences. He could see, at once, that these phenomena were the beginning of new natural laws: the ones that govern the relationships between the visible and the invisible world. He recognized in the action of the invisible world one of the forces of Nature, whose knowledge would throw light on the immense problems that until then had been considered insoluble, and he understood its reach, under the religious point of view.

His main works written on this subject are: *The Spirit's Book* (1857); *The Mediums' Book* (1861); *The Gospel According to Spiritism* (April of 1864); *Heaven and Hell, or The Justice of God According to Spiritism* (1865); *Genesis, the Miracles and Predictions According to Spiritism* (1868); *Revue Spirite*, a monthly newspaper of psychological studies, that had begun on January 1st, 1858.

He demonstrated that the facts, which previously had erroneously been considered supernatural, were actually subject to the universal laws. He classified them under the phenomena of Nature, thereby eliminating the last refuge of the wonder and one of the elements of superstition.

The date of the launching of *The Spirit's Book* was the foundation of Spiritism. Starting from that moment, the doctrine attracted the attention of the serious-minded people and took a rapid development. In few years, those ideas overtook numerous followers in all social circles around the world. Instead of the postulate: "Without the Church there is no Salvation, which fosters separation and animosity between the different religious sects that have been responsible for so much bloodshed, Spiritism has as its emblem: Without Charity there is no Salvation, which enhances equality among men, tolerance, freedom of conscience and mutual benevolence in the eyes of God.

Instead of blind faith, which annuls free thinking, Spiritism says: Unshakable faith is only that which can meet reason face to face in every human epoch. In order to have faith a base is necessary; and, this base is the perfect intelligence of that which one believes. It is in fact due to the dogma of blind faith that today we still have such a great number of non-believers; as it tries to impose itself by annulling one of man's most precious abilities, that of reasoning, and of free-will.

A tireless worker, always the first to take on a task and the last one to leave it, Allan Kardec died on March 31st, 1869. He died as he lived: working.

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SPECIAL THANKS

HAVE YOU HEARD OF FABIANO DE CRISTO HOME?

Special thanks to *Lar Fabiano de Cristo* for the support in publishing this book.

Fabiano de Cristo Home, started as a “*Dream of Love*.” This non-profit organization has fought since its creation in 1958 to break the chains of moral, social and material poverty, which imprison families in the situation of social exclusion with tragic consequences for all society.

Since its early start in Brazil, the founders believed that the true sense of a charitable organization should be based on its educational features, and not only on giving away some clothes today, some food tomorrow, or some toys by Christmas time. It would be important to learn the true causes of material, social, moral and spiritual misery, in order to fight them directly.

Such direct action on the misery causes implies in searching the origin of the physical, moral and spiritual dependencies that afflict people. The program develops assistance and promotional methodology after a diagnosis of the situation of families in social risk. From this starting point, each attended family is given an individual *Life Quality Plan*, estimated to reach its target within 5 years. Reaching the target means having the family break the misery chain, with dignity. Once this goal is reached, the family steps aside, so that more families may join the program.

Fabiano de Cristo Home’s Social Inclusion Plan is part of the Collective Consultation Body of Non-Governmental Organizations of Unesco’s Basic Education and Literacy Program.

In order to face such wide scope of needs, this program was established considering 5 main groups:

- Group 1** - Abandoned or orphan children, in need of a replacing home;
- Group 2** - Children that for some reason need to be temporarily separated from their families or placed in temporary shelter;
- Group 3** - Families in extreme poverty that require full promotion;
- Group 4** - Response to emergency needs;
- Group 5** - Attention to the elderly, especially those in extreme poverty.

FABIANO DE CRISTO HOME’S WORK IN ACTION:

233 social Promotion Units supporting 11,359 families in all Brazilian states.

Children Education (0 to 6 years old) - Attendees: 2,755.

Creativity Development and Scholastic Support (7 to 13 years old) - Attendees: 5,887

Professional Formation (Teenagers and adults) - Attendees: 2,755

Educational and Social Follow-Up - Attendees: 35,283

Basic Needs Support- Including co-participants that are regularly given food (28,806) and medicines (3,521) - Attendees: 49,467

Citizenship - Attendees: 25,032

102,218 Medical/Dental appointments attended at the units

341 Social Groups that involve 13,591 participants taking part in the Social-Family Orientation Program.

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LET'S WORK TOGETHER, TO SET UP PEACE FOR A BETTER WORLD.
Help us help more families!



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